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DICK SEIZED HIS LORDSHIP BY THE COAT COLLAR AND THE SEAT OF HIS TROUSERS, AND PITCHED HIM HEADLONG INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET.

OR,
Baby Bess, the Girl Gold Miner.

A TALE OF PISTOL POCKET.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS "ROSE-BUD ROB" NOVELS, "BONANZA BILL," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

ONE STORMY NIGHT.

LOCALE: Pistol Pocket, Arizona—a mining-camp of constantly increasing importance.

Time: One wild, stormy night, late in October, when the wind blew a perfect hurricane, driving the rain in drenching, chilling gusts against all objects it encountered, and picking up, and swirling through the air, leaves and other debris.

It was such a night as even the most rugged mountaineer would not have cared to be abroad, for not only was the storm chilling to the bone, but one was liable to injury by the flying missiles.

At Pistol Pocket the streets were deserted, but within-doors all was warmth and gayety, the Grand Pacific Hotel and saloon—the only one in the camp—being particularly crowded, both with local residents and "pilgrims."

Pistol Pocket is a mountain-surrounded valley, to which access can be gained by only one route—a deep, narrow pass descending through the great range, and known as Pretty Pass.

Except by this route it was impossible for horsemen or vehicles to reach the prosperous town in the pocket.

Through some secret influence with the Government authorities, a wide-awake mountaineer known as Mountain Mose had obtained permission to establish a toll-gate midway in Pretty Pass and exact a toll-fee from all who wanted to go in either direction over the route.

A cabin had been built on one side of the pass and a log-barn directly opposite on the other side, and between these two structures hung a ponderous gate, which prevented any one from passing without first "coming down" with the toll.

As travel to and from the Pocket was quite large and daily increasing, and as the toll was twenty-five cents per head, man or beast, it will at once be seen that the shrewd mountaineer's profits were something handsome.

Then, too, he had another source of revenue quite frequently.

The gate closed for the day invariably at six P. M., and no one was permitted to pass through under any circumstances.

People coming from the Pocket had the alternative either of turning back to the camp or putting up over night at Mountain Mose's Hotel. Travelers *en route* for the Pocket city, and arriving at the gate after six o'clock, had no alternative but to stop at the hotel or camp down over night in the pass.

Thus Mr. Mose had a "corner" in the traveling traffic.

His hotel could scarcely lay pretensions to being one, from the fact that the cabin comprised only one room of large dimensions.

Arranged along one side were two tiers of single cot-beds, which altogether were capable of accommodating about a score of guests.

On the opposite side of the big room was a fire-place, and a dirty-looking, ill-stocked bar.

The only other furniture consisted of a few stools and deal tables.

As no meals were served at the "Hotel Mose," no restaurant facilities had been provided.

Mountain Mose was a black-bearded customer, villainous of aspect, and a very giant in size.

"In Pistol Pocket, he was regarded as a full-proof desperado, and few there were who did not stand in awe of him.

Since establishing himself at the pass, it was believed that several moneyed guests had been made away with, but there was little or nothing of actual proof.

On the evening of which we write, when the wind howled through the pass, and the rain dashed against the window panes, three men sat at a table in the toll-gate house, with a bottle and glasses before them.

One was the proprietor of the shebang, Mountain Mose; the other two were equally as villainous looking toughs—ruffians of the worst type, whose belts bristled with deadly weapons.

All three evidently had been inbibing freely of the contents of the black bottle.

"I tell ye, boys," said Mountain Mose, with a hiccup, "I'm sort of a p'ilos'pher in my way, and ef you've any notion o' tryin' the job, we need ter go mighty keerful, or the worms'll hev a feast on ye, afore a month passes by. As Mayor of Pistol Pocket, as well as owner of it, that cuss, Deadwood Dick, has got a strong graft, and a lot of friends."

"We don't keer a cuss for that!" declared Pete Pigeon, one of the party, and sometimes known as The Strangler, from the fact that he was reported to have strangled several persons "ho had incurred his enmity."

"Ef ther cuss has got a few friends, he has got enemies, also, who'd like ter see him kicked inter Kingdom Come—I fer one. He ain't got no more right to lord et over ther town than I hev, an' fer one I'm in fer removin' him, an' givin' others a show."

"An' I, too!" declared Bill Monk, the third ruffian. "He's a cussed monopolist, an' he orter be stamped out. Thar's a half-hundred able bodied men in the camp, out o' work, and why?

'Cause they won't go to work in the big mine, fer day wages—starvation wages, at that—and be bossed about by this Deadwood Dick, and his superintendent, Jerry Justice. Et ain't accordin' to their notions be ruled by a king in this free country. The boys ain't goin' to join a union, ner be compelled to join one, in order to earn a livin' when that's plenty o' room in Pistol Pocket whar they could pitch in fer themselves, and turn an honest penny, without being forced ter submit to boss rule!"

"Right ye aire, Monkey!" asserted Pigeon. "You're head's level. No cuss like Deadwood Dick aire goin' to king et over us, not ef he has got two hundred miners to back him. He's got ter go!"

"Waal, boyees!" spoke up Mountain Mose, "I allow et ain't fair the cuss should monopelize ther hull profits o' the pocket, but he's got big backin', besides bein' able to wipe out a dozen men hisself. So et would be next ter madness fer a few o' ye ter tackle him!"

"That ain't our lay-out, at all!" Pigeon averred. "We've got a plan that beats that!"

"What is it?"

"Oh! we've got it fixed so two of us can do him, and that, too, to-night!"

"To-night? Where?"

"Here!"

Mountain Mose shook his head.

"Not here!" he said grimly. "There's enuff bad report afloat about this place—to make it sick for me, ef everything were known, so no more ov that fer me."

"Pshaw! that's nothin'. What if there is half a dozen stiffs in the well beneath this room? There's room fer another. An' we say that Deadwood Dick gets his just deserts right hyer, to-night. Ef you know when yer hide is skin, you won't kick ag'in' it, neither!"

"D'y mean that fer a threat?" Mose demanded.

"Waal, sorter!" Pigeon replied. "Ef ye go ter kickin' too much, inquiries might be made as ter ther secrets of this shebang!"

Mountain Mose made a quick reach for his revolver, but before he could draw it, he was covered by the weapons of both Pigeon and Bill Monk.

"Oh! we're on ter ye," Pigeon sneered. "Yer a good man, Mosey, but no match fer us. Now, then, do we hev ther privilege o' this ranch, to-night, or do we not? Jest answer that, ef you please!"

What the answer would have been it would be hard to say, for at that instant there came a loud and peremptory knock upon the door, which caused all three ruffians to start to their feet.

CHAPTER II.

THE FATAL TRAP.

WHEN the knock came upon the door, Pete Pigeon and Bill Monk exchanged glances full of significance, and the latter said in an undertone which did not catch the ears of Mountain Mose:

"That's him!"

As for Mose, he gave a grunt and growled out:

"Some cuss as wants to get through the gate, I suppose, but he'll get left!"

Seizing a lantern, he went to the door and opened it.

Outside was a young man, mounted upon horseback, and thoroughly drenched with rain.

"Hello!" he saluted. "Will you open the gate, sir, so I can get through?"

"Not much!" Mountain Mose replied, gruffly. "This gate closes for the night at six, and don't open ag'in 'til mornin'!"

"But, my dear fellow, I am wet and cold and want to get through to the camp to-night!"

"Can't help that. Never break the rules, under any circumstances! Oughter come along before."

"But, see here, I can't sit out here in the rain all night. Open the gate and I'll pay you well for it!"

"Don't want yer money. This hyer's a hotel, and ef ye wanter stop over, ye kin, pervidin' ye pay fer yer accommodations! Who aire ye, anyhow?"

"My name is Sir Clyde Carleton," was the reply.

"Oh! ye'r' a blarsted Englisher, aire ye?"

"I am an English gentleman, sir!"

"Humph! Every Britisher that comes over heer sets hisself up as a gentleman. Wal, aire ye goin' ter come in or not?"

"Have you accommodations for my horse?"

"Yas."

"Well, then, I suppose there is nothing to do but stop over, if you won't open the gate!"

"Nary open! Heer, Pete, come an' put away the hoss!"

Sir Clyde accordingly dismounted and entered the tavern, while Pete Pigeon went out and took charge of the horse.

Once inside, in the light of the fire, it was perceptible that Sir Clyde Carleton was an unusually handsome young man, some four-and-twenty years of age.

He had a graceful, willowy figure, almost woman-like in its contour, and was well-dressed.

His face was full and handsomely chiseled and stamped with intelligence, with a fair complexion, sparkling blue eye, a pleasant, mustache-shaded mouth and curly blonde hair.

Plainly he was a person of good birth and breeding, hard at contrast with the rough toll-gate keeper and his associates.

"Reckon you'll be better off here than ef you'd went on ter Pistol Pocket!" Mountain Mose observed, after he had looked his guest over from head to foot, and noted that he wore a costly diamond pin.

"Most any shelter is welcome, such a night as this!" Sir Clyde replied, glancing at the surroundings, curiously. "How far is it from here to Pistol Pocket?"

"A matter of four mile, as the crow flies."

"And may I ask how it is that you keep the gate closed after six o'clock?"

"Waal, ye see, ther country back a piece is infested with road-agents, and the gate is kept shut to prevent 'em from a night raid an' a rush into the Pocket, where they could raise a heap of devilment!"

This appeared to satisfy the young Englishman, and he immediately sought the fireplace, and proceeded to dry himself.

When he had partly succeeded in the operation, he said:

"Well, landlord, what can you get me up in the way of something to eat? I am as famished as a wolf."

"We don't keep nothing to eat 'round here!" Mose allowed. "The stage brings me up what grub I need every morning, and so I never bother with any other stuff. Got some prime old Taos whisky, tho', ef that will do you any good."

"Well, that's better than nothing," Sir Clyde said, "as I am rather weak, after a long journey. So give me a nip!"

And so saying, the young man walked over to the bar, behind which Mountain Mose presided.

A long black bottle and a glass were placed before the traveler, and he poured out a good drink and raised it to his lips.

Before he could toss it off, however, he felt a touch upon his arm, and turning, beheld Pete Pigeon and Bill Monk standing alongside the bar.

"See heer, young feller," observed Pigeon, "et strikes me you've forgot something, haven't you?"

"Not that I am aware of," Sir Clyde replied, with evident surprise. "What is it I have forgotten?"

"A stranger in these parts, ain't you?"

"I am, sir."

"Tho' so!"

"Well, sir, what of it? What do you want?"

This time the baronet spoke haughtily.

And Pigeon and Monk then laughed uproariously, while old Mose joined in.

"Well, durn my cats if you ain't a greeny!" Pigeon allowed. "What d'y expect, except a drink? Et's customary in these parts that when a man drinks he don't drink alone, but sets 'em up fer the boys. 'Cordinly, et's rulable fer you to invite us to wet our whistles."

"Indeed?" And Sir Clyde looked the contempt he felt. "Well, sir, as I do not happen to be a resident of your delectable country, I cannot comply with your customs!"

"Oh! ye can't, eh? Well, now, me bloomin' Britisher, you will, or you'll get the worst wallopin' you ever had in your life. For instance, how do you like that, as a foretaste?"

And hauling off, the ruffian gave the Englishman a thump beside the head.

Sir Clyde, of course, was staggered, but, with a quickness that was surprising, he dashed the contents of his glass into Pigeon's eyes, and his wide-open mouth, half-choking him with the vile liquor, and almost blinding the sight of both eyes.

The pain must have been excruciating, for he went howling about the room at a great rate.

Heeding not, Sir Clyde wheeled around just in time to dodge a terrific blow from Bill Monk and to give him one, in return, which sent him to the floor.

Sir Clyde then turned to Mountain Mose, who

stood behind the bar, grimly watching proceedings.

"Well, do you want some of the same?" was the abrupt query.

"No! I reckon not!" Mose allowed, although there was a diabolical gleam in his eyes. "All I want of you is for your horse-keep and your lodging, and pay for the whisky."

"Of course. How much is the bill?"

"Five dollars, and I'll treat you to another drink."

Carlton probably knew that it would be no use to argue about the extortionate price; so he took out a well-filled pocketbook, and paid the bill, receiving in return a glass of the worst liquor he had ever touched.

All this time Pete Pigeon was dancing grotesque figures around the room, and howling anathemas at the stranger.

Suddenly he was seen to stagger, dizzily; then to throw up his arms and fall heavily to the floor, where he lay writhing as if in intense agony, but only for a moment, for then a shudder shook his frame and he stretched out and was motionless.

Mountain Mose and Carleton both ran forward, and when they reached his side the ruffian was really dead.

"Well, you've done it!" old Mose said, turning grimly to the baronet. "You have murdered one of the best men in the mountains!"

"It is false! I did not kill him!" Sir Clyde declared. "It was you who killed him!"

"Curse you! what is that you say?"

"I say that you murdered him. The liquor you gave me contained a deadly poison, and you know it! The big brute swallowed enough of it to kill him."

"Curse you! you lie! I'll have your life for that insult!" Mountain Mose cried, savagely. "Down with you to the depths of purgatory!" and as he spoke a section of the floor where Sir Clyde was standing dropped from beneath his feet and the young Englishman disappeared from view.

At the moment, an old man and a young girl had entered the saloon by the front door, and so were witnesses of the tragic scene.

"Stranger!" said the old man, in a deep, clear tone, "you are a murderer!"

Mountain Mose at once whipped out his revolver; but, before he could cock and use it, the old man and the girl had darted from the room, closing the door behind them.

Mose blazed away at the door, until he had fired every shot; then opening the door, he too darted forth into the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE VICTIM OF A JOKE.

PASSING from Pretty Pass, we will now go down to Pistol Pocket.

It was early in the day following the events last narrated, and the morning sunshine bathed the Pocket in a golden bath of sunshine.

Greatly grown from what the camp was when last introduced to the reader * the settlement now presented the appearance of a much older town than it really was, and although there was but one hotel and saloon, combined, there were numerous other places of business, and buildings had notably increased.

In a cosey, comfortably furnished office, on the main street, sat the dashing and handsome proprietor and "mayor" of Pistol Pocket, Deadwood Dick, Jr., engaged in looking over an Eastern paper. Nothing strange in appearance, since last we met him, the Prince of the West looked quite as much at home in his new position as though he were in the saddle, or in the midst of a pitched battle.

With his round, pleasant vi age, his keen, sparkling eyes, and his long, wavy hair and curling mustache, few, if any in the camp, could compare with the mayor, in point of good looks, and by the budding feminine element, he was, of course, regarded as a decidedly priceless "catch."

But, none of the fair daughters of the camp seemed to attract his particular attention, most of his time being absorbed in attending to his business interests.

That he was rapidly acquiring riches, from his ownership of the Pocket, was beyond question, and this very fact caused many to envy him his success.

Backed by his trusty employees of the Majestic Mine, he had succeeded in enforcing the regulation that no one should mine for gold in the gulch, except they entered his employ, and joined the Miners' Union.

* See Half-Dime Library No. 508, "DEADWOOD DICK'S DELIVERANCE."

A considerable number of gold-diggers came to the camp who objected to this sort of thing, and some took their departure, while others remained, and hung about in idleness.

As Dick sat in his office, this pleasant sun-shiny day, engaged in reading, his face wore an expression of contentment, and it was evident that his mind was unruffled by trouble.

In another chair sat his office-boy, an apt young lad of fourteen, whom Dick had employed to look after the office, during his absence. The boy's name was Johnny Smile, and boy-like, he was full of fun, and ever ready to play a trick on some one. And most especially on his good-natured employer.

Johnny, too, was now reading the local newspaper—an enterprise which some wide-awake Yankee had already established in the camp, under the suggestive title of "The Pistol Pocket Palaver."

It was a laugh from Johnnie that caused Deadwood Dick to look up from his paper.

"Well, Johnny, what is it?" Dick queried.

"Oh! boss, this is a rye go!" Johnny replied.

"Did ye git any answers, yet?"

"Any answers to what?" Dick demanded, in surprise.

"Why, to your advertisement in the paper!"

"I've no advertisement in the paper. What are you talking about?"

"Oh! ye hain't got no *ad.*, hey? Then, I'd like to know what you call this!"

And handing his master the *Palaver*, Johnny pointed to a paragraph, which ran as follows:

"WANTED:—At once—a wife. Must be talented, good-looking, a good housekeeper, and not over nineteen or twenty. To the right party, a good home will be given. Apply at once to

"RICHARD BRISTOL, JR."

The young Mayor of Pistol Pocket could scarcely repress an oath, as he read the above.

"By all the devils!" he ejaculated, "that is the work of a detestable scamp. If I find out who put that in the paper, I'll make him eat his boots as sure as my name is Dick Bristol!"

Thrusting the paper into his pocket, he clapped on his hat, and rushed from the office; while Johnny Smile sat down, tipped back in his chair, and roared with laughter.

"Whoop-eel won't ther be fun for the fiddler, now, tho'? Well, I should smile a Johnny Smile smile! Bet ten cents to a 'tater that the boss will scalp old Pottsy, the chap that runs the *Palaver*! Golly! I'd like to see the fun, and I would, too, only that I'd be givin' myself dead away. Ef the boss were to suspect that I caused that ter be put in the paper, he'd kick me all the way from heer to Kalamazoo.

"But, wait, though, till gals begin to pour in; then there'll be fun, you bet!"

In the mean time, with darkened brow, Dick hastened toward the newspaper office, which was located in a little shanty, at the lower end of the street.

Arriving at the place, he found the superannuated proprietor, Potiphar Potts, perched upon a stool at his desk.

He was bald-headed, hooked-nosed, ferret-eyed, and the thinness of his physique seemed to indicate that he had not always fed on the fat of the land.

Walking up behind him, Dick seized him by the shoulder, and jerked him off the stool, as he cried:

"See here, you old rat terrier! what do you mean by publishing such a scandalous joke as this in your paper?"

And the advertisement was thrust before Potiphar's vision.

"Speak up!" Dick exclaimed, sternly, "or by the eternal, off goes your scalp!"

"I—I didn't know there was anything wrong about it!" Potts asserted, trembling with apprehension. "The ad. was sent in for publication, accompanied by a dollar, and so I inserted it. Surely you can't blame me, for I didn't know but what it was all right!"

"Who sent it in?"

"It came through the mail, but there was no signature except the initials 'R. B.' Here is the letter. You can see for yourself."

He handed Dick a letter, which the latter proceeded to peruse.

It read as follows:

"EDITOR OF *Palaver*:—

"Inclosed find one dollar, for which please insert advertisement in your valuable paper. R. B."

There was a deadly glitter in Dick's eyes as he read the above, and he thrust the letter into his pocket.

"Have you no idea who wrote that?" he demanded, eying Potiphar Potts, sharply.

"None whatever, sir!"

"Well, now, look here. You find out for me

who wrote the letter, or caused the advertisement to be inserted, and I'll give you a hundred dollars!"

Potts looked pleased. To him, a hundred dollars seemed a fortune.

"Very well, sir, I will try," he said, "but I have no hope of success."

"And, mind you," continued Dick, "if you ever publish any more stuff about me in your paper, without my personal authority, there'll be a dead Potts for the town to bury," and Dick took his departure, his anger but little diminished.

"Is this an intended insult, or is it a practical joke?" he muttered, as he made his way back to his private office. "I am inclined to think it is the former, for it is no secret to me that I have enemies in the camp who bear me malice. I presume I shall be overrun with applicants for the position of Mrs. Bristol. Well, let 'em come!"

And a grim smile flitted over the young mayor's handsome face, as he imagined what result the advertisement might produce,

CHAPTER IV.

"WHETHER HE WOULD OR NOT."

WHEN Deadwood Dick got back to his office, he found that his anticipations were not without foundation, for, seated in the office, was a young and rather attractive-looking woman.

Judging from appearances, she was some eighteen years of age, and a decided brunette, with jet-black hair and eyes, and a complexion verging upon that of a Spanish or Mexican woman.

She was the possessor of a figure, noticeable for its graceful contour, and was very neatly attired.

Dick gave her an inquiring glance, as he entered, and perceived that she was an entire stranger to him.

"Now for it!" he muttered, under his breath, and taking off his hat, he turned to his visitor.

"Good-morning!" he said politely. "Is there anything I can do for you, madam?"

"Miss, if you please!" she corrected. "My name is Miss Mabel Lamont, and I have come to answer and accept your application for a wife. I haven't a doubt of my ability to please you, and we shall get along splendidly!"

The startling presumption of the young woman nearly knocked the breath out of him.

"I beg your pardon, my dear lady," he said, "but there is a mistake about this matter. I've not advertised for a wife."

"Oh! yes you have," she replied, positively. "I saw your advertisement in the paper only a few minutes ago, and I hurried here from the hotel, so as to be the first to claim the honor."

"But, I tell you I've made no application for a wife, whatever!" declared Dick. "Least of all my intentions is that of getting married. That advertisement was put in by some person unknown to me, either as a practical joke or for some malicious purpose. I had nothing to do with it."

"Oh! that's to thin. You men are terribly deceitful creatures. You can't put me off in that way. I am poor and an orphan, and need a husband who will protect me. I am young, good-looking, a good housekeeper, and more talented than most girls. I am of French descent, and you know the love of a French girl is sincere and true. So you can have no reasonable excuse for not taking me in preference to any one else. Can you, now?"

Literally thunderstruck, Dick sank back upon a chair, knowing not what to say or do.

While Johnny Smile, perched upon a stool at Dick's desk, with his back turned to the couple, was ready to explode with laughter.

After a lapse of over a minute, during which time he fairly glared at Miss Lamont, Dick finally found use of his tongue.

"Young lady," he said, "I am astonished at you. I told you that getting married was the least of my intentions; yet, seemingly, you would force yourself upon me without any solicitation on my part. You never saw me before, nor I you, and even if I were inclined to take a wife, I should expect to have some acquaintance with her first. Moreover, I would go a lifetime without a spouse before I'd stoop to advertise for one. So you will please understand that your errand here is a fruitless one, and govern yourself accordingly."

His tone was firm and decisive, and yet polite.

The eyes of Miss Lamont sparkled angrily, and hers were just the kind of eyes that were capable of flashing anger when she was aroused.

"Which, I suppose, is equivalent to saying that you will have nothing to do with me—that

you will scorn the humble offer of a poor but trusting girl, who has neither home nor friends?" she demanded.

"I do not scorn you, nor your offer, as you term it, neither can I give you the least encouragement. In fact, as I have told you, I have not the slightest idea of getting yoked in matrimonial harness again, and if I had, I dare say I should prefer to choose some one who was not so eager to push herself forward. I think, therefore, Miss Lamont, that is all that is necessary to be said!" and rising, Dick went over to a writing-table, and proceeded to examine some papers, by way of indicating that the interview was at an end.

Miss Lamont's face now wore a dark, revengeful expression, but which only faintly depicted the rage that burned within her bosom.

"Perhaps it is all that is necessary for you to say," she hissed, advancing so close to him that her breath fanned his cheek, "but I've yet to have my say, if you please. You, sir, have insulted and humiliated me, and after my back is turned, you will make fun of me."

"Do so, but please remember the old adage, that he who laughs last laughs best. I am not one of your weak American girls, weak-minded, helpless, and so timid as to be frightened out of their wits at sight of a mouse—oh! no! You have done me an irreparable injury, and I shall resent it. So look out for me, for, as sure as my name is Mabel Lamont, I'll make you bitterly repent the humiliation you have caused me!"

Turning, then, she passed from the office with the carriage of a queen.

Dick walked to the door, and gazed after her for a few minutes, until she entered the Grand Pacific Hotel, a scowl darkening his usually tranquil brow.

"A queer character," he muttered, "and none the less impudent than queer. Hump!" and with a shrug of disgust, he turned back into the office, to be greeted with a yell of laughter from Johnny Smile, who could hold in no longer.

This outburst was the 'straw that broke the camel's back,' and Dick turned upon Johnny, angrily.

"What is the matter with you?" he demanded. "What are you laughing at?"

"Whoop-ee! Jerusalem! Who wouldn't laugh," snorted Johnny. "Ef that wasn't the rummest go of all, I'll eat my necktie. Tell ye what, boss, ye'r' no good, as fur's the gals go. Why didn't ye send that gal around to me? I'd 'a' made a mash, sure, fer ther gals did use ter say I was some on the mash!"

"Oh! dry up, you infant," Dick growled, and sat down at his table, to attend to some letter-writing.

He was not destined to remain long undisturbed, however, for soon he had two more visitors.

This time, however, as he thanked good fortune, he was not to be afflicted by would-be Mrs. Bristols. His callers were none others than the old man and young girl who had appeared and disappeared so mysteriously at Hotel Mose, in Pretty Pass, the preceding night.

The old man's steps were feeble, and the deathlike pallor upon his face indicated that he was not long for this world. The girl supported him as best she could, and when he sank upon a chair, it was with a sigh of relief.

A strangely mated pair they were, indeed.

The old man was fully sixty years of age, if not more, and his form was bent, and joints stiffened. His face was yellowish, emaciated and lined with many a wrinkle; his eyes were back in their sockets; and his straggling hair and beard were snowy white. His clothing was old and ragged, his shoes a mere wreck, and his hat had lost its shape.

Rip Van Winkle-like in appearance, it was plain to see that he had not been slumbering for twenty years, and had seen some pretty rough times.

The girl was about sixteen years of age, rather short of stature, but still graceful and symmetrical, and in face and feature one of the prettiest little maidens Dick had ever set eyes upon, he decided.

The countenance was of refined and sweet expression, combined with purity; her eyes were blue and brilliant; her mouth small, with tempting, rosy lips, and her wealth of wavy hair which fell in ripples almost to her waist, was like a shimmering fall of golden sunshine.

She, too, was very plainly clad, although her clothing was neat, clean, and unorn.

A strangely mated couple they were, and the Mayor of Pistol Pocket wheeled around in his office chair, to get a better look at them.

He saw at once that they were strangers in the Pocket, and wondered why they had called

upon him; so he at once opened the conversation with a pleasant "Good-morning," adding:

"In what way can I be of service?"

CHAPTER V.

OLD ISHMAEL AND BABY BESS.

THE old man, whose gaze had been fixed momentarily upon the floor, now looked up, and, with an effort gave answer:

"You will excuse us, I pray, sir," he said, "for intruding on your privacy, but we were directed here in our search for the mayor's office."

"And you have found it," Dick replied. "What is it you wish?"

"I wish to secure your assistance, sir, in making some provisions for my adopted child, here, my Baby Bess, as I call her. I some time ago heard of you as a kind, respectable gentleman, and I came here in hopes I could prevail upon you to lend me a little assistance—not pecuniarily, but otherwise!"

"What sort of assistance is it you want?" Dick asked. "I seldom refuse to do a person a good turn, providing they do not want too much."

"So I have heard, and many whom I hear speak of Deadwood Dick, speak of him as brave and noble in the truest sense—a friend of the orphan, and a protector of the weak and wronged. It is the aid of such a man that I crave, hence I came to you.

"I will try and explain the object of my visit, but must do so briefly, for I am not long for this world. I was shot at and wounded, last night, and have been filling up, inwardly, ever since, although the wound has not bled externally. For upwards of an hour past, I have felt death creeping over me, and it was only with the support of Baby Bess, that I was able to reach your office."

At this point, the old man paused for a moment to regain strength, and then went on:

"My name is Ishmael Iverness, and I formerly belonged in the shire of Sussex, England, where for years I was bailiff to the old Sir Lionel Carleton, of the noble house of his name.

At length Sir Lionel died, and the estate descended to his son, Sir Hubert, then a young unmarried man. In due time, however, Sir Hubert married his lodge-keeper's daughter—an act that caused a great sensation at the time—and for the first time in many years, the house of Carleton had a mistress.

"The new Lady Carleton was a charming but unsophisticated bit of humanity; but Sir Hubert loved her devotedly, and they were a very happy couple. Both were of rather retiring disposition, and went little into society. This was Sir Hubert's express wish, for he could not bear the thought of having his wife snubbed by blue-blooded society, simply because she was only a lodge-keeper's daughter.

"At length, a child was born to them—a girl-baby, whom they named Beatrice, or Bessie for short. Well, matters went along nicely for the first six years of their married life, and then came a dark day.

"A quarrel arose between Sir Hubert and his cousin, Lord Lindley, over an insult offered by the latter, and the result was a duel, in which Sir Hubert was killed. It was but part of Lindley's scheme to succeed to the Carleton heritage.

"But, the schemer failed. The Carleton estate not being entailed, Sir Hubert had made wise provisions so that in event of his death, the estate and other wealth would descend to his wife, and after her, to his daughter, Beatrice. After her, no provisions were made; and in case of her death the estate would go to the next of kin, the house of Lindley.

"Well, as you may suppose, Lady Carleton was nearly distracted over the death of Sir Hubert, and so heavy was the blow upon her, that she never fully recovered from the effects of it. She lived alone, with her child and her servants, and seldom received visitors. Thus the years passed on, until Bessie was ten years old.

"At this time my lady's health was very poor, and on the decline, and it seemed only a matter of time ere she must pass under the rod. One day she called me to her—for she had always made me her confidant from childhood up—and said: 'Iverness, the time has come at last when we must part!' Though naturally astonished, I made no answer, and she went on: 'Yes, we must part. I realize at last that I cannot live much longer, and must arrange my plans for the future, accordingly. In event of my death, as you know, everything descends to Bessie; but should I die, Lindley will persecute her—ay! put her out of the way in order to gain possession of the estate.'

"He is an unscrupulous villain, and I could not die and leave Bessie within his reach. So, Iverness, you must take Bessie and leave for America, and so hide yourselves that Lord Lindley cannot find you, thus to remain until Bessie is of age, when you can safely return to England and she can reclaim her own. Of course it will be hard for me to part with my child, but I would do it a hundred times, rather than leave her at the mercy of Lester Lindley."

"Well, this was my lady's edict, and of course, after long years of service and kind treatment, I felt in duty bound to do as she wished. So arrangements were put in motion, and in due time everything was in readiness for our departure.

"The day before we were to leave, my lady sent for Clyde Carleton, the sixteen-year-old heir and scion of another noble house but entirely different race of Carletons, and placing Bessie's hand in that of Clyde, betrothed them, in the hope that when they grew up, they would marry, and thus perpetuate the name of Carleton.

"Well, Baby Bess and I came to America, six years ago, and being supplied with money, traveled West. We were robbed and cheated at every turn, at first, but after a couple of years of this sort of thing we became able to hold our own, and though we've had some tough experiences, we've been able to weather the storm, until now, when our associations must soon end."

Tears sprung into the eyes of Baby Bess, at this, and flinging her arms about old Ishmael's neck, she hid her face upon his shoulder and wept.

After a momentary pause, the old man went on:

"Well, about a month ago, we received a notice of Lady Carleton's death, and by the same mail came a letter from her, previously written, in which she stated that death was hourly expected; and that Lord Lindley had started for America. That it was in search of Bessie, she had no doubt, and cautioned me to be on the alert, and keep out of his way.

"My health rapidly failing, and knowing that death was near, I conceived the idea of coming here, and seeing if I could not put myself under your protection, having heard so much about you. But last night I was shot, and shall not be here long to trouble you. All I want you, now, is to become the guardian and protector of my little Bess until she becomes of age. You need not contribute a penny toward her support—only watch over and protect her, after I am gone, as you would a sister. Promise me you will, kind sir, and I will tell you a plan I have in view, but I must do so briefly, for I feel that my strength is leaving me fast, and I cannot talk much longer."

Before answering, Dick arose and went into an inner office, soon returning with a glass of wine.

"Drink this, my friend!" he said. "It will brace up your strength."

Ishmael quaffed the beverage eagerly.

"Thanks!" he said. "That's the first liquor of any kind that has passed my lips for years. But, sir, you have not yet answered me!"

Dick reseated himself, and ran his fingers thoughtfully through his hair.

"True, I have not," he said; "and, more than that, I scarcely know how to answer you. You see, I am a single man, and were I to take charge of the young lady it might create a talk that would be unpleasant to her. Otherwise, I don't know that I should have any occasion for refusing to accept the trust."

"Then you need have no hesitation," Baby Bess spoke up, in a sweetly modulated voice. "I make it a point to pay no attention to idle gossip, and what others say neither troubles nor concerns me."

"Well, that shows a brave, reliant spirit, and I am inclined to act as your champion. I can build you a shanty adjoining my own, and so have you always within calling distance."

"Thank you! thank you!" old Ishmael spoke up. "You have taken a load off my mind. And, now, I will tell you what I want you to do. Bessie wishes to be independent, as far as earning her own living is concerned, and she is not a bit afraid to work, either. You have good plow-mining land in the bottom, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes, there's some pretty fair pay dirt," Dick replied, "but hardly enough to make it an object for me to bother with it."

"So I presumed, and yet, one person would be able to pan out enough to earn a livelihood, by steady labor, not?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Then I will tell you what I propose. Bessie is desirous of obtaining her own living, and, moreover, she is really a practical miner. Now

I want to buy for her a slice of this placer land, so she can have it as a support. We have managed in the last couple of years to save five hundred dollars of the last remittance from England, and we want to invest that in a claim that will produce Bessie her living until time for her to return to England. As soon as she comes into her rights she will be in position to amply reward you for all your kindness or expense in her behalf. Now, sir, will you do me this last favor, for my little Bessie's sake? Poor little Baby Bess!" and the old man passed his hand affectionately over the sunny head of his little ward. "She will be all alone in the world when old Ishmael is gone!"

And a tear rolled down the old man's cheek, while Baby Bess wept bitterly.

Deadwood Dick was much affected, and rising, went forward and took Ishmael by the hand.

"No! not all alone, my friend!" he said, "for I will stand by her like a brother, and woe be to the one who dares to molest her! Moreover, she shall have the best placer claim in the pocket, and that too, Scot free, as I will not accept a penny for it!"

"May God bless you for those words!" Ishmael said fervently, while Bessie, with tearful eyes, gave the young mayor a grateful look. "I can now die in peace, knowing that the heiress of the house of Carletons is in safe hands."

"Oh! never say die!" Dick said, cheerily. "While there is life there is hope. I will call in the local doctor, and perhaps he may be able to do something for you."

"No! no! it will be of no use. No earthly power can save me now. Death is already gathering me in its embrace, and I have but a short time yet to live."

"But how did you receive this wound of which you speak?"

"Yes, I must tell you that. Bessie and I were on our way to Pistol Pocket, during the storm of last night, when we came to a toll-gate, and our further passage was checked. There was a big cabin, there, however, and seeing a light, we opened the door and entered. As we did so, we became witness to a strange sight. Two men were standing in the middle of the room in belligerent attitudes. One was a gentle-looking young man, the other a very ruffian in appearance.

"An instant after we entered, the ruffian cried: 'Down with you, to the depths of purgatory!' and instantly the young man disappeared, as if by magic, through the floor. Horrified at what we had seen we fled from the place, closing the door behind us. A volley of bullets followed us, fired through the door, and one of them hit me in a fatal spot. However, we managed to escape and secrete ourselves until day-break, when we once more set out for this place. I marvel that I ever lived to reach it and hold out until now!"

"You think this young man was precipitated through a trap into some under-ground place?" Dick asked.

"Yes, without a doubt, and if there was any truth in the ruffian's utterance, he met his death in the fall!"

"This matter must be investigated!" Dick said, decidedly. "Mountain Mose's ranch has been surrounded by suspicion ever since it was built, and I fear more than one man has met his doom there. By the way, I have a couch in the next room, sir, and perhaps if you lie down and rest awhile, you will feel better."

"No, I shall never feel better in this world," the old man answered. "However, if you will help me a little, I think I will lie down. Before I do, here are all the papers necessary to establish Bessie's identity and right to her English estate."

He handed Dick a roll of documents; then Dick and Baby Bess assisted him into the adjoining room, where he was soon comfortably resting.

He lingered along through the day, faithfully attended by both Dick and Bessie; but, as the sun sunk behind the mountain brow, and dusky shadows began to creep down into Pistol Pocket, the spirit of Ishmael Iverness took its flight, like one falling asleep he passed away.

CHAPTER VI.

TROUBLE BREWING.

OLD ISHMAEL was given a respectable burial, the next day, and Dick secured accommodations for Baby Bess, at the Grand Pacific, until he have a shanty erected for her, adjoining this one where he usually spent his daytimes, and slept at night.

During the afternoon, he and Bessie made a

tour of the gulch bottom, and Bessie showed her knowledge of mining, by selecting a spot where mineral wealth was the most abundant, although the surface "sign" was not particularly encouraging.

"This will answer?" she said. "There is good pay dirt here."

And so Dick staked out a good-sized claim, and later, put up a board sign, containing the following:

"NOTICE.

"This claim has been purchased by Baby Bess, the Girl Gold Miner, and all persons are positively forbidden to trespass hereon. "DEADWOOD DICK."

As soon as these arrangements were perfected, Dick organized a party of trusty men, and they set out for the toll-gate in Pretty Pass; for Dick was determined to investigate the fate of the young man whom Old Ishmael and Bessie had seen disappear through a trap in the floor of Mountain Mose's cabin.

The journey to the toll-gate was accomplished in good time, and the gate was found wide open, although it was after six o'clock, and night was coming rapidly on.

The cabin had a deserted appearance, when the party dismounted, and the door was found to be locked.

Dick rapped several times upon the door, but receiving no answer, he ordered his men to burst it in, which was promptly done.

Then, it was found that the cabin was deserted, indeed, with one exception, and that exception was Pete Pigeon, who lay cold and stiff in death, upon the floor.

Lanterns were lit, and after a brief search, the trap door in the floor was discovered, and forced open, disclosing a dark aperture some two feet square, from out of which came a disagreeable odor.

A search of the premises soon found a long, stout rope, and a lantern was attached to one end of this, and lowered into what proved to be a deep pit in circular form.

When the lantern reached the bottom of the pit, and shed its light around, it was discovered that there were several bodies lying on the damp bottom, which were in an advanced stage of decomposition, but none was distinguishable as having been placed there recently.

Finally, one of the party consented to go down into the pit, and make sure, and on his return, he announced that he had found four bodies, but all had been in the pit some time, and all had been men well along in years.

There was no corpse in the pit answering to Bessie Carleton's description of the young man she had seen disappear through the floor; so there was nothing left, for Dick and his followers, but to close the trap door to the charnel vault, and return to Pistol Pocket, which was done.

On arrival there, Dick posted a notice in every place of business in the camp, offering one hundred dollars' reward for the capture of Mountain Mose.

But, Moses had evidently scented danger, for he made himself conspicuous by his absence, and no one could get any trace of him.

A week passed, with scarcely an incident worthy of mention.

Baby Bess really went to work upon her claim, industriously, and her unassisted efforts were quite satisfactorily rewarded, for the pay dirt panned out sufficiently well to yield her an average profit of some six or seven dollars a day, so well had she chosen the spot of her claim.

She was an object of considerable interest to the idle people of the camp, who would gather at a respectful distance, and watch her with curiosity.

No one offered to molest her, however, this no doubt being partly due to the fact that she paid not the slightest attention to any one, except Deadwood Dick, and kept a repeating rifle close at hand and in conspicuous view, while she worked.

Dick had built and fitted up for her a cosey shanty, adjoining his office, so with what she could earn with pan and shovel, and the five hundred dollars Ishmael had left her, she was quite comfortably "fixed."

As for Dick his sort of life jogged along in about the same rule. He was not blind to the fact, however, that trouble was brewing, for the future. The subdued voice of dissension was heard in the camp, over his proprietorship of the Pocket, coming mainly from the idle miners and roughs not in his employ.

It had come to his hearing that these same men had organized into a body, under a chosen leader, and were in the habit of holding noctur-

nal meetings and laying plans for getting possession of the Pocket.

That they would succeed in such a scheme, Dick had little fear, unless they received larger reinforcements, for fully two-thirds of the men in the camp were in his employ, and all of them were strong, able-bodied fellows, who had sworn to stand by him, and protect his interests, through thick and thin, and with whom he was a general favorite—more so, in fact, than his superintendent, Jerry Justice.

Of late, Justice had appeared gloomy and down-spirited, and, although he attended to his duties with usual promptness, he had very little to say to any one.

Dick noticed this fact, but never made it his business to inquire the cause, as he had no reason to believe that he was in any way concerned in the matter.

It was his custom to visit the mines, a couple of times daily, to see how work was progressing, and as he had to pass the Justice dwelling, on his way, he frequently paused a few minutes for a friendly chat with Jerry's wife—she that was Floy Fydell.*

Married life had detracted nothing from the beauty and animation of the superintendent's wife and apparently she was as gay and happy as a bird.

One pleasant forenoon, about a week after Dick's visit to the toll-gate, he was on his way to the Majestic Mine, when he espied Floy standing at the gate of the rustic fence that surrounded their cottage.

Seeing her motion to him, Dick crossed over, and was surprised to see that she had recently been crying.

"Why, Mrs. Justice, what is the matter?" he queried. "I see you have been weeping."

She tried to force a smile, but her lip quivered as she did so.

"Yes, I have been crying," she said, "and I am the most unhappy person living!"

"Why, Mrs. Justice! How is this? I always thought you were very happy since you and Jerry were married."

"So I have been until recently. But, for some days past Jerry has been very cold and distant toward me, and not at all like his usual self. I have tried to get him to tell me what was the matter, but all to no use. This morning he arose and left the house, without even speaking to me, or waiting for his breakfast. Oh! Mr. Bristol, what can be the matter?"

"I am sure I don't know, Mrs. Justice. I too have noticed a change in Jerry of late, but did not have any idea that it extended to his home life. I have refrained from approaching him on the matter, presuming he would consider it none of my business. Perhaps he is not well?"

"Oh! yes he is. I asked him if he didn't feel well, and he said he never felt better. Oh! Mr. Bristol, I wish you would talk with Jerry, and find out what is the matter. You have been a good friend to both of us, and I am sure Jerry would confide his trouble to you."

"I will talk with him," Dick said, "and find out, if possible, what the dickens ails him. I'll not have him slight his pretty little wife through his own peevishness—not even if I have to take a hand in the game myself!"

"Oh! please do not talk harsh to Jerry, Mr. Bristol—but then I know you won't, you are so good—and don't tell him I mentioned to you anything about his coldness toward me."

"Very well, I will not, Mrs. Justice. However, I will, in a casual way, try to get at what is the matter, and if I find out it is anything you can remedy, I will let you know."

"I wish you would, Mr. Bristol. You are very kind indeed. But, Mr. Bristol, if it will not make any difference to you, perhaps it would be better if you do not stop here in the future—at least not for a time."

"Ah! Why?"

"Well, I don't know; maybe I'm silly, but sometimes I have a notion that Jerry's strange behavior is due to jealousy!"

"Jealousy?"

"Yes!"

"Ha, ha! what an idea! Why, who in the world would be jealous of?"

"You!"

The look of astonishment that came over the face of Deadwood Dick, showed how startling this revelation was to him.

"Of me?" he ejaculated. "Why, Mrs. Justice, you astonish me. The idea of Jerry's being jealous of me is simply preposterous. If I thought he was such a numskull as that I'd be tempted to horsewhip him."

"I may be wrong," Floy said, apologetically,

*(See HALF DIME LIBRARY No. 508.)

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"but such a suspicion occurred to me. I know that Jerry loves me truly, and some men, if they see any one else paying the slightest attention to their wives, get insanely jealous."

"Yes, I suppose so; but I never took Jerry Justice for that sort of a man. However, when I come to think of it, I have been in the habit of pausing at the gate quite frequently, and in the future will be more circumspect. Good-morning."

"Good-morning, Mr. Bristol. I hope you will not feel offended?"

"Bless you, no. I am only too glad you informed me of your suspicion."

"And you will try to find out concerning Jerry?"

"I will."

"Then, if you learn anything of interest to me, meet me in the rear of the stamp-mill at eight to-night. Jerry will be in town then, and there will be no danger of any one seeing us."

"Very well," Dick replied, and walked away toward the mouth of the shaft, a rather serious expression upon his handsome face.

"This is a thunderin' nice kettle of fish!" he muttered. "Undoubtedly Floy is right. Jerry has treated me barely civilly, when I come to think of it, and on two occasions I know he has seen me standing at the gate, conversing with his wife. But, if he is really jealous, I can but believe that some one has been poisoning his mind. Ha! I have it! That French adventuress, Mabel Lamont. Hang it, I am so provoked that I scarce know whether to laugh or swear!"

As a choice between the two, he did neither, but, quickening his steps, hurried on toward the mine.

He found Jerry Justice, stalwart and handsome, even though roughly dressed, engaged in overseeing the work of the miners, but the same gloomy expression rested upon his massive, bearded face.

He simply nodded to Dick as the latter approached him, and then gave some directions to a miner, to obviate the necessity of speaking to his employer.

"Jerry," Dick said, as soon as opportunity afforded, "what appears to be the matter with you the past few days? You look as gloomy as a graveyard at midnight. Are you not feeling well?"

"Oh, yes, as well as usual, bodily, though I am troubled with headache a great deal."

"Perhaps you are too closely confined to business. You need more open air than you get down here," Dick suggested, anxiously. "I dare say it can be arranged so that you can take a few days' vacation."

"Maybe I will be glad to take advantage of the opportunity!" Justice replied, and then turned abruptly away.

Dick fancied he detected irony in the superintendent's tone, and he turned and left the mine, with a clouded brow.

"I don't half like this," he muttered. "There's trouble brewing. I must be prepared to meet it!"

He went direct to his office.

When the miners emerged from work, at the call of the noonday whistle, a placard greeted their vision, containing the following announcement:

"On and after date, the employees of Deadwood Dick, will receive a ten per cent. advance upon their present wages.
DEADWOOD DICK."

As may be surmised, this announcement created great surprise among the miners, and they united in giving a rousing cheer for their employer.

Jerry Justice was the last man to leave the mine that noon, and when he did so, he was met by a woman, and that woman none other than Mabel Lamont.

"Well?" Justice demanded, rather surlily.

"As I told you!" she replied, triumphantly.

"I have not been deceiving you. He saw her to-day, and they meet again to-night, in the rear of the stamp-mill. Meet me here at half-past seven, and I will prove it to you!"

CHAPTER VII.

LORD LINDLEY ARRIVES.

SINCE Deadwood Dick's new *regime* as ruler of Pistol Pocket, the Grand Pacific, under the able management of Joe Garry, had blossomed out as a hotel second to none, in point of excellence, of any in the Territory.

It had been enlarged and refurnished, and possessed, aside from the excellent table, varied advantages and attractions for the comfort and amusement of its guests.

There was a billiard and pool parlor, a well-

stocked bar, a faro and poker room, and a large combined office and reading-room, where an Italian string band nightly gave concerts.

The extensive piazza at the front of the house was furnished with comfortable chairs, and, in fact, the Grand Pacific surpassed any similar resort in Arizona.

Toward afternoon of the same day, witnessing the events last chronicled, two men stood upon the hotel piazza, chatting together, while they leisurely puffed away at their cigars.

One was a man of at least forty years, while the other did not look to be over five-and-twenty.

The elder was a trifle under medium height, but coarsely corpulent. His eyes were cold and "fishy," his mouth thick-lipped, and his hair quite gray.

Taking his dress and general appearance into consideration, it was easy to see that he was an Englishman of wealth, and mayhap of station.

The younger man was a dashing-appearing, well-dressed fellow, of the go-as-you-please type, and, singular as it might seem, was the very counterpart of Deadwood Dick, in almost every particular.

Two human beings could hardly have been more alike in face and figure; the eyes, mouth, hair and mustache, as well as the facial expression of the stranger, tallied almost exactly with that of the Mayor of Pistol Pocket.

In fact, the only marked difference in appearance between the two was their clothing.

The elder man had arrived by the evening stage a short time before his introduction to the reader; the younger man had been in Pistol Pocket several days, but had kept himself closely confined to the hotel.

The two evidently had met before, judging by their conversation.

"I hardly expected you so soon, Lord Lindley," the younger man said. "I was on the point of writing you a letter, when I saw you alight from the stage."

"I got restless and uneasy, waiting to hear from you," his lordship said, "and so I thought I would come on and see you. Have you made any discovery yet, Jack?"

Jack chuckled, softly:

"Well, you can just bet I have," he declared, triumphantly, "and I am ready to claim the money you offered me."

"What! have you really found them?" the Englishman demanded, excitedly.

"Yes. The girl is here in Pistol Pocket!"

"By Jove! this is good news, indeed! And, old Ishmael Iverness?"

"He's dead!"

"Good! So much the better! But come, sit down. I want to hear all the particulars!"

They sought an obscure end of the piazza, and became seated, after which Lord Lindley produced some choice cigars.

"Now, then, I want to hear all about it," his lordship said. "If you've really run down the game, Jasper, I'll make you rich."

"Well, I have run it down," Jack replied, smilingly, "and am quite ready to claim my reward. As to the particulars, they are not extensive. I searched through the various mining-camps of Arizona, until I obtained tidings of an old man and a young girl answering to the description of the parties I was looking for. Then fixing myself up with the wig I now wear, I took up the trail in dead earnest."

"From camp to camp I dogged them, but always arrived at a given point just after they had left for some other place. This sort of thing lasted for some time, but gradually I gained ground on them, and at last arrived at Big Pine Camp two days after their departure for this place.

"I at once sent you word that I was on the trail, and after a brief rest I came on here, to find that old Ishmael and Beatrice had indeed come here, but that the old man had died almost immediately after his arrival."

"Before he died, it appears, he appointed the mayor of the camp, a fellow known by the name of Deadwood Dick, as guardian over the girl."

"The deuce!"

"Since then, this guardian has built Bessie a shanty of her own, and presented her with a placer claim, where she works during the day, and they say she pans out quite a snug amount of the auriferous, too."

"Have you seen her?"

"At a distance—yes. But I have made no attempt to approach her, as a sign upon her claim warns all persons against trespassing thereon, and Deadwood Dick has given out word that he will shoot whoever dares to intrude there."

"You see, Deadwood Dick owns this camp and nearly all that's in it, and two-thirds of the population are in his employ, so that his word is law and his power very great. Considering these facts, I did not feel warranted in trying to make her acquaintance. She's a fine girl, however, and the picture of Lady Carleton."

Lord Lindley shrugged his shoulders.

"I presume so. But that shall make no difference!" he gritted. "Be she as beautiful as an houri, she shall no longer stand between me and the Carleton fortune!" and he threw away his half-smoked cigar. "I have schemed for years to achieve this end, and now that success is attainable, I do not mean to be defeated. What sort of a man is this Deadwood Dick?"

"They say he's a pretty tough customer when he is riled. He's a dead-shot, and equally accomplished in other phases of warfare. Everybody takes good care not to cross him, for it was by literally wading through blood that he won possession of this Pocket."

"You haven't any idea that he will refuse to give up the girl?"

"But I have, you know! He appears to take a deep interest in her, and no doubt will insist that he is her guardian."

"Bah! I will knock his claim in the head by showing him papers purporting to have been signed by Lady Carleton, before her death, which makes me the girl's legal guardian!"

Jack Jasper smiled disagreeably.

"That's about as much as I thought you knew!" he said, with a shrug. "You must remember that you are in America now, and your forged English papers ain't worth a fig. Besides, in this country a girl can choose her own guardian, if she is without a protector. So, if my young Lady Beatrice were to choose Deadwood Dick, the law would uphold him in keeping her, in spite of you."

Lord Lindley scowled.

"We'll see about that," he said. "I'll brook no interference from any Yankee dog in this matter—not I! If he refuses to give up the girl on demand, I'll see that harsher measures are taken."

"And there's just the man here in camp to take them," Jasper said.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, if you should want this Deadwood Dick removed, there's a man in camp who could be hired to do the job."

"Who is he?"

"They call him Mountain Mose, hereabouts. Once upon a time he was known in London as English Eph!"

"What! English Eph, the cracksman?"

"Exactly—the same chap who was packed off to Van Dieman's Land."

"And he is here in Pistol Pocket?"

"Just so."

"Where?"

"Oh, skulking around somewhere in disguise. There's a reward upon his head, and he is laying low for awhile."

"I should like to see him, for he is the very man I may want to use."

"No doubt you will see him soon enough, when he finds out you are here. Ah! here he comes now!"

"Who—Eph?"

"No. The Mayor of Pistol Pocket—Deadwood Dick!"

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD LINDLEY RUNS AGAINST A SNAG. JACK JASPER'S announcement caused Lord Lindley considerable curiosity, and he leaned forward to get a better view of the mayor as he came striding leisurely along toward the hotel.

When his lordship's curiosity was in a measure satisfied, he turned abruptly to Jasper, and surveyed him critically.

"Why, you two are as alike as two peas!" he ejaculated, in surprise. "But for your dress, no one would know you apart."

"Just so. I was as much surprised as you when I saw the resemblance. I little thought, when I assumed the disguise, that I was making myself the exact counterpart of another, whom I was soon to meet. If this Deadwood Dick were to suddenly disappear, I could step into his shoes and no one would ever be the wiser for it."

"So you could! So you could! That's a happy thought, by Jove! In that way, while you would be feathering your own nest, you could at the same time assist me in getting control of the girl."

"Yes, I reckon I could."

"Well, we must see about this thing. I will first make a demand for the girl of this Dead-

wood Dick, and then, if he refuses to give her up, we will talk over the matter of his disposal. I'll leave you now, and approach him on the subject, as soon as opportunity affords."

"Do so, and let me know the result."

After Lindley had disappeared, Jack Jasper chuckled softly, as he puffed away vigorously at his cigar.

"Lindley is right!" he muttered. "It will be a capital idea to put this Deadwood Dick out of the way. Then I will step into his place, and reign as ruler of this golden realm. Ha! ha! I always knew I was born under a lucky star, even if I did have to serve a turn in Van Dieman's Land. Yes, my gay and festive Deadwood Dick, you must suddenly disappear, as just at the present time you are quite numerously in the way of my future plans. When I have successfully stepped into your boots, I shall contract with Lindley for the removal of the girl, and shall apparently put her forever out of the way, and send Lindley back to England exultant in the supposition that he is sole heir to the Carleton fortune. Then I will make love to and marry my piquant Lady Bess, which, I being Deadwood Dick, her friend and protector, I shall have no difficulty in doing, and then we will go back to old England, and give his lordship the grand bounce, and make him come down handsomely, which he will do rather than risk exposure and a term of imprisonment. Ha! ha! Jack Jasper, you are a born diplomat!"

When Deadwood Dick reached the hotel, he mounted the piazza, and entered the bar-room, where he purchased and lit a cigar.

He was about to leave when Lord Lindley entered and approached him.

"You will excuse me, sir," his lordship said, "but I believe you are the gentleman I am in quest of—Deadwood Dick. Am I right or wrong?"

"You are right," Dick replied, regarding his accoster inquiringly. "I am Deadwood Dick."

"The mayor of this place, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Ah! yes. I have heard of you, but never before had the honor of meeting you. Have you time to spare me a few minutes private conference, sir? I have a matter in hand which I would like to speak to you about."

"Oh! I guess I can accommodate you," Dick replied, off-handedly. "Step this way."

And he led the way to the hotel office, where they became seated.

"My name is Lord Lester Lindley," the Englishman began, after lighting a cigar, "and I come of one of the first families of England. This is my first visit to your country. It is hardly probable I should have come over, but for the fact that the death of a distant relative left a responsibility upon my hands—a duty to perform, you see."

Dick simply nodded.

"Some years ago," pursued his lordship, "this relative of mine, for family reasons, sent her young daughter over to this country, in charge of an old family servitor, here to remain until her ladyship's death, when the daughter and heiress was to return to England, to claim her own."

"My lady died, some time ago, and, on her death-bed, had me duly appointed guardian of said daughter until she should attain her majority."

"I at once set out for America in search of my ward, and have found, singularly enough, that she is living here in Pistol Pocket, under your care and protection!"

"Yes? To whom do you refer?"

"To Beatrice Carleton, whom Ishmael Iverness left in your care but a short time since."

"Ah! yes. Miss Carleton was left in my charge, and is quite comfortably situated," Dick said. "I caused a shanty to be built and fitted up for her, and she has a little placer claim at which she works, during the day, and makes quite a neat little sum of money—more than enough to supply her wants. I take good care to see that no one molests her, and really I am proud of my protegee. I shall regret the time when she returns to her native country!"

"No doubt you are greatly interested in your charge," his lordship said, "and that fact makes me the more sorry to inform you that Miss Carleton must accompany me back to England, at once. As her guardian, it is my duty to put her to school, and see that she receives a good education, befitting her station in life, before she makes her *debut* in society. Of course you are not in position to make any objection to my plans for her personal welfare!"

"On the contrary, of course I am in just that position!" Dick coolly replied, after taking a long pull at his cigar. "Miss Carleton was left

in my charge by one who was authorized by Lady Carleton to take care of her until she was of age. It was Lady Carleton's express wish that the girl be kept out of your reach, until she became of age, and could control and manage her inheritance. Therefore, I shall look out for my *protegee*, until such time arrives!"

Lord Lindley flushed, angrily.

"But you forget, sir, that I am the girl's guardian, and have the power to act, in this matter—the power! sir! the power!"

Dick laughed, quietly.

"A fig for your power!" he said. "If Lady Carleton appointed you guardian over Lady Bess—which I am aware she did not—you might have some power, in your own country; but here, your power don't amount to shucks. I own this camp, and nearly all that's in it, and when you come here with the idea of exercising foreign authority, you'll find yourself grandly left!"

Lindley scowled, savagely.

"We'll see about that!" he growled. "The girl shall go back to England with me, no matter what you say!"

"Not if the court knows herself, she won't!" Dick retorted. "It will require more blarsted Britishers than you can command, to take her from Pistol Pocket!"

"Oh! it will, eh? Supposing, you Yankee dog—supposing she consents to accompany me—what then? You cannot detain her!"

"Nor, shall I try. If Miss Carleton desires to return to England with you, she shall have that privilege. But, I am safe in saying that she will refuse to have anything to do with you!"

"We'll see. I'll convince you to the contrary. And, mind you, if I find you are trying to influence her against me, it will be the worse for you!"

"Is that so? Why, what will you do?"

"What will I do? I'll teach you a lesson you'll not soon forget, you Yankee upstart!"

"See here, my man, lookout you don't call me any more pet names, or it will be the worse for you!" Dick cried, with rising anger.

"I repeat it!" retorted Lindley. "You are a Yankee upstart, and the meanest kind of one!"

This was enough. Dick was on his feet, in an instant, and seizing his lordship by the coat collar and the seat of his trowsers, he ran him out of the office through the open doorway, and pitched him headlong off the piazza, into the middle of the dusty street.

When the unfortunate Englishman arose, his elegant clothing was a sight to behold, his silk tie was crushed into a shapeless mass, and his face was skinned and bleeding, in a dozen places!

His first taste of Yankee hospitality was hardly up to his idea of nicety!

CHAPTER IX.

DICK READS A LETTER.

It was not the first time Deadwood Dick had taken it upon himself to bounce an unruly character out of the Grand Pacific, and the bystanders who saw him send Lindley a-flying, gave him a cheer.

Since Dick's *regime* in Pistol Pocket, there had been few fights or other "jamborees" to break the monotony of everyday life; consequently the Englishman's precipitate journey into the street created a sensation, and immediately drew a crowd.

Lord Lindley uttered a roar like a bull as he scrambled to his feet, and rushed back upon the piazza.

"I'll have your life for this!" he yelled, shaking his fist at his enemy; but, as Dick made a move toward him, he darted into the hotel to escape further bouncing.

After waiting a few minutes to see if his lordship intended to come forth and execute his threat, Dick left the hotel and sauntered back toward his office.

As he approached the shanty abode of Baby Bess, he saw Mabel Lamont leave the place and hurry away.

"Ha! what does this mean?" Dick exclaimed.

"Has that adventuress been trying to strike me another blow?"

He quickened his gait into a swift stride, and soon overtook the Frenchwoman.

"Madam," he said, laying his hand upon her shoulder, "a word with you, please!"

She turned quickly, her face pale, and her eyes blazing with anger.

"How dare you lay hands upon me?" she fairly hissed, clinching her hands as if about to strike him. "How dare you?"

"Because I dare, my fine lady," was Dick's reply. "I want to know what you were doing at the shanty of Baby Bess."

"It's none of your business what I was doing there!" was the defiant answer. "I'm not supposed to give an account of my goings and comings to you."

"I'm not so sure of that. You are a stranger here, in camp, without any apparent business or profession, and therefore come under the class of suspicious characters. I am already aware that you have been trying to poison my superintendent's mind and set him against me, and now, I dare say you have been trying the same game on my ward."

"It's no such a thing!" Miss Lamont declared, cowering under his stern gaze. "I simply made the young lady a friendly call."

"I shall find out about it. Be it as it may, you cannot deny that you have been trying to influence Jerry Justice against me."

"I do most emphatically deny the charge. I do not even know who Jerry Justice is."

"You are a barefaced liar, and you know it, and I know it!" Dick declared, "and now, let me give you a bit of advice, which you will heed unless you are a blamed sight bigger fool than I take you to be: *Keep away from Baby Bess!* If you do so, I shall not take any action against you, until I find you guilty of some other misdemeanor. If, however, I hear of your speaking to her again, I shall certainly put you under arrest, and imprison you for being a nuisance. So bear this in mind!" and turning, Dick strode back to the shanty of Baby Bess.

Mabel Lamont glared after him a moment, a demoniacal glitter in her dusky eyes.

"Curse you!" she hissed. "You think you have intimidated me by your bravado, eh? Ha! ha! you shall see! You know not with whom you have to deal, my gallant Deadwood Dick. I swore I'd have revenge, and revenge I'll have! Your days in Pistol Pocket are numbered, my festive Richard!"

In the mean time Dick reached Bessie's humble but cosey home, and found the girl miner engaged in preparing the evening meal.

She was paler than usual, however, and there was an expression about her eyes that denoted anxiety.

"Bessie," Dick said, taking a seat in the doorway, "you just had a caller?"

"Yes, sir," was the faint reply.

"That woman is bad to the core!" Dick went on, "and I will see that she does not trouble you again. She has got a grudge against me because, when she, an utter stranger, besought me to marry her, I promptly refused. I presume she gave me a good overhauling, eh?"

"Oh! yes, sir. She told some terrible things about you, and tried to induce me to leave here and come and stay with her at the hotel."

"Did you believe what she told you?"

"No, indeed, and I told her so, too. Then she got mad and called me a fool, and told me that Lord Lindley was in town in search of me, and that she would tell him where to find me. This made me mad and I ordered her to get out of the house, which she did. But oh! Mr. Bristol! she made me awfully nervous!"

"Bravo! I'm glad you fired her out. If she comes bothering you again, douse her with a pail of hot water. So it seems she knows Lord Lindley, eh?"

"So it appears. Is there any truth in what she said—that Lord Lindley has arrived in Pistol Pocket?"

"Yes, the chap has arrived, and but a short time ago I had the pleasure of throwing him out of the Grand Pacific Hotel into the street!"

"Oh! if he has come here, what shall I do?" and Bessie clasped her hands in great anxiety.

"Why, do just as you have been doing. I shall keep an eye on this bloodied Britisher, and if he attempts to molest you, it will be to his sorrow. I have given him timely warning and I don't think he will trouble you. However, he may seek to intimidate you, if he can find an opportunity, when I am not near at hand; but don't let him scare you in the least. You have a good pair of revolvers, and know how to use them, too. So if Lindley lays a hand on you when I am not around, do not hesitate to put a bullet through him!"

"Oh! I would not dare do such a thing!"

"Pshaw! Have no scruples about doing it. Self-defense is one of the laws of nature, and no one can be held censurable for defending themselves, especially a woman. This Lindley has proven himself, to my satisfaction, to be a contemptible puppy, and I have no doubt but that his motives, as far as you are concerned, are of a villainous nature. So it is your duty to protect yourself when I am not near to protect you. Either I or my office-boy, Johnny Smile, will be next door all the time, so that any outcry on your part, will bring you assistance."

"You are very kind, Mr. Bristol, and I assure you my gratitude knows no bounds. I will try to defend myself, if worst comes to worst, but I do hope Lord Lindley will not come near me, for I dread to see him."

"Maybe he will not. I don't think you need have any apprehensions as far as to-night is concerned, for it will take the better part for him to plaster up his face, and clean the dirt off his clothes!"

Dick took leave of his *protegee*, and entered his office next door, where he found Johnny Smile seated in an easy-chair, his heels elevated several degrees higher than his head, upon a desk. And moreover, Johnny was making short work of a package of cigarettes, a new luxury that had just arrived in camp.

"Johnny, I want you to remain at the office this evening," Dick said, going to a drawer and taking out a revolver.

"What for?" demanded Johnny, who usually had his evenings to himself.

"To be within hearing distance, in case Baby Bess calls for assistance. She has an enemy in town, who may seek to molest her, during my absence. Here is this revolver. If you hear an outcry, go to her assistance, and order the man to leave, at the point of your weapon. If he refuses, salivate him, but take care not to aim at a vital spot!"

"All right, boss! I'll do just as you say."

"You won't be afraid, will you?"

"Not I!" Johnny declared. "Ther' ain't no skeer about Johnny Smile, an' ye orter know it, by this time. Et would be ripe old fun for me to sail in to ther' rescue, fer I don't mind admittin' that I'm clean dead stuck on Bessie, yer know."

"It is not probable you will be called upon to give an exhibition of your valor to-night. Keep your eyes open, however. I shall not be gone long."

And Dick took his departure.

At eight o'clock that evening, the soaring moon was well up in the great starry cupola of the heavens, and shed down upon Mother Earth a light of mellow brilliancy. The main street of the camp swarmed with people, most of whom were sauntering to and fro, enjoying the delightful night, but beyond this, the camp lay silent and deserted.

Winter was near at hand, and the denizens of the camp, were making the most of the pleasant, deliciously bracing weather.

Over at the shafts of the mines the hoisting-engines sent continuous jets of exhaust steam into the clear night air, and the clanking of the machinery made a strangely weird sound.

In the vicinity of the big stamp-mill, a monotonous silence prevailed.

It was exactly eight o'clock, when Deadwood Dick arrived at the appointed meeting-place with Floy Justice, in the rear of the mill.

On his arrival there, he found that Floy had not yet arrived, so he seated himself on a boulder, to await her coming.

He had not long to wait, for she soon made her appearance, but so muffled up, as to be scarcely recognizable.

As he drew near, he saw that she was weeping, and quickly springing to his feet, he went forward to meet her.

"Why, Mrs. Justice, what is the matter?" he asked, taking her hands in his. "Why these tears?"

"Oh! don't ask me," she sobbed, "for I cannot answer you. Read that, and it will explain all. Oh! my God, I wish I were dead, and in my grave!"

Dick took a sheet of paper, which she extended to him, and by aid of the brilliant moonlight, was enabled to decipher what was written thereon.

His brows knitted in a frown, as he read the following:

"MRS. JUSTICE, MADAM:—

"Hereafter, I shall make the hotel my headquarters, and you can have our home all to yourself. Your conduct has been an insult to me, and a chasm yawns between us, which can never be bridged. Henceforth, you can invite your company into the house, instead of spooning over the gate. It will look better at least. I shall withdraw my support, but as your new flame is well-to-do, no doubt he will take a mortgage on the house, and give you money sufficient to provide you with the necessities of life.

JERRY JUSTICE."

Deadwood Dick could not refrain from uttering an imprecation, as he finished reading the note.

"The infernal fool!" he cried, angrily. "He shall pay dearly for this letter. To think that he should mistrust a good little wife like you, Mrs. Justice! Why, I'll have the fellow flogged within an inch of his life!"

"Oh! no! no! You must not harm Jerry, Mr. Bristol!" And Floy threw her arms appealingly around his neck.

Just then, Jerry Justice came around a corner of the stamp-mill, and with folded arms, stood in full view.

CHAPTER X.

SEPARATION.

It was rather a dramatic scene, Florence clinging to Deadwood Dick with her arms about his neck; while in the background stood Jerry Justice, statue-like and motionless, his arms folded, and with a look of bitter hatred upon his face—stood there in bold relief, an accusing witness of, as he supposed, his wife's perfidy.

Dick was the first to see him, and he gently released himself from Floy's embrace.

"Mrs. Justice," he said, "your husband is watching you. Remain here, and I will go forward and speak to him."

Floy grew deathly pale as she saw Jerry, and sunk back upon a rock, faint and terrified.

"Oh! you will not hurt him?" she pleaded; "Promise me that."

"For your sake, Mrs. Justice, I promise, but it is only for your sake. The infernal fool deserves to be shot down without mercy!" And with darkening brow Dick strode forward to meet his superintendent. But half-way had he advanced when he found himself covered by Jerry's revolver.

"Halt!" the superintendent ordered. "Stay where you are, and come no nearer, or I will put a bullet through you. What do you want?"

"I want to know what you mean by your outrageous treatment of your wife?" Dick replied, sternly. "Your conduct toward her is both unjust and unmanly, and demands an explanation, sir. That's what I want of you, Justice."

"Indeed!" Justice replied, sneeringly.

"You're a pretty plum to ask questions of that sort! You, who have played the part of a double-faced hypocrite, and alienated the affections of my wife. I have been cognizant of the flirtation that was going on between you two, only through hearsay; but to-night I have satisfied myself of the truth of the reports, and that is all I want. Henceforth yonder woman is nothing more to me than the veriest stranger. She has dishonored and disgraced my name, and now she is free once more to do as best pleases her. As for you, I would be justified in killing you, but my contempt for you is so great that I would not waste powder and ball upon you!"

For a moment Dick was too mad to give utterance, and, but for his promise to Floy, he would, no doubt, have rushed forward and attacked the superintendent.

With an effort, however, he managed to control his passion, and spoke composedly.

"Justice," he said, "you are laboring under the greatest of delusions in supposing for an instant that your wife is not perfectly loyal and true to you, or that I have alienated her affections from you. Further than being a sincere friend to both of you, I have done nothing to warrant this unreasonable jealousy on your part. True, in passing your house, I have occasionally paused at the gate and had a chat with your wife, but with no other motive than honest friendship."

"It appears, however, that you have grown insanely jealous, and to-day, I learned for the first, from your wife, that it was her belief, it was my well-meant courtesy to her, which was making you so gloomy and sullen. Of course I ridiculed the idea that you, of all persons, should be jealous of me, and at your wife's request, I promised to try and find out why you were treating her so coldly."

"Mrs. Justice was very much distressed, and requested me not to come near the house any more. But, as she wanted to hear the result of my investigation, she arranged to meet me here, to-night, and when she came, she was weeping and in great distress over the insulting letter you had sent her."

"Now, Justice, I know that this woman, Mabel Lamont, has been putting you up to this revolt, and I am surprised that a man of your mental caliber should heed the persuasion of an adventuress."

"In behalf of your faithful little wife, of whom you ought to be too proud to let a jealous thought enter your mind, I have given you a truthful explanation of the case, and now, if there is a spark of manhood in your composition, you will go forward and ask your wife's forgiveness, and make up with her, and never again let the demon jealousy enter your heart!"

There was a momentary silence, when Dick finished speaking; then Jerry Justice uttered a

hard, grating laugh—a laugh filled with bitter sarcasm.

"I apologize—I? Oh! no. You have a very oily tongue, Deadwood Dick, and a very happy faculty of smoothing over matters, but you cannot stuff me up with taffy. Once I am convinced of a thing, it is useless to try to change my mind. So you have expended your breath all to no use."

"Yonder woman no longer has any claim upon me, and hereafter must look out for herself. As for you, I presume you will discharge me from your employ, so I will see you and go you one better, by informing you that you can look for a new superintendent, as, from this time on, I am no longer in your employ!"

"For once, you are very right!" Dick declared, sternly; "and, more than that, you will never get employment again, in Pistol Pocket. I'll give you forty-eight hours to get out of the camp, and if you are not gone by the expiration of that time, I'll have you fired out. As for your deserted wife, I will see that she does not come to want!"

"Oh! I presume so!" Jerry replied, sarcastically. "But, remember this: You'd better look out that it's not you who get's fired out of the camp, instead of me!"

And with this threat, he turned and strode away, rounding the corner of the stamp mill, and disappearing from view, while Dick returned to Floy, who had been near enough to overhear what had transpired.

She was very pale, but far more composed than Dick had expected to find her.

"Mrs. Justice," he said, "you have my sympathy in this hour of trouble, and as I consider myself in a measure to blame for it, I shall do all in my power to make reparation. If I were you, however, I wouldn't let the matter worry me, in the least. No doubt Jerry will come to his senses, after awhile, and be only too glad to come back to you."

"I shall not worry!" Floy replied; "nor do I consider you in the least to blame. Jerry Justice has shown the true inwardness of his nature, and henceforth, our paths in life lie apart."

"Oh! I wouldn't despair. I'll wager he'll come back and ask your forgiveness, ere the moon grows old. In the mean time, you had better lock up your shanty, and come and stay with Baby Bess, for the present. She will be delighted to have you, I am sure, for company. If you need money, at any time you have but to call on me."

"Thank you, but I am not at present in need of money, as I have quite a sum I had saved up before I married Jerry. I think I will accept your invitation to stay with Bessie a few days, as I am afraid to stay alone in our own shanty."

And so it was arranged.

Together they went to the Justice shanty and locked it up, and within a short time afterward Floy was safely and comfortably housed in the cosey home of Baby Bess, who gave her an affectionate welcome.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MEETING IN THE STAMP-MILL.

MASTER Johnny Smile, though a model office boy by day, was not quite so model after night-fall, and he regarded Deadwood Dick's order to remain in the office, as an imposition encroaching upon his good nature.

Johnny liked his evenings off, as well as the ordinary youth of his age, for he and several other lads of kindred dispositions, were wont to congregate and indulge in a little game of poker, penny ante, a game which Johnny was particularly successful at.

Therefore, Dick had not been ten minutes absent from the office before Johnny began to get restive, and became possessed of a longing to go out and be stirring around town.

"Drat the office!" he growled. "'Tain't fair fer the boss to go off and have his fun, and leave me cooped up here, like a squirrel. Ther' boys'll expect me at the stamp-mill, and—by gosh! I'm goin'. The office kin go to blazes. I'll be back 'fore the boss will, anyhow, and he won't be none the wiser for my absence."

And having formed the resolution, Johnny locked up the office, and skurried away toward the stamp-mill, within whose gloomy interior the youthful poker club did nightly congregate.

The mill was dark and deserted, when Johnny reached it, none of the other boys having yet arrived, and so Johnny threw himself down on a bench, to await their coming.

Johnny was a lad of a rather easy good-nature, and, more than all, was chronically lazy.

The quiet that pervaded the stamp-mill, appeared to have a soothing effect upon his senses,

and he had not reclined on the bench ten minutes, ere he was asleep.

How long he had slept, he had no means of knowing, when he suddenly awakened, with a start, and sat up.

The interior of the mill was still wrapped in darkness, and he knew that his cronies had not yet come, or else had come and gone.

Listening a moment, however, he heard voices at the further end of the mill, and distinguished one voice as being decidedly feminine.

"That ain't the boys," he mused, "for that's a woman's voice. Wonder who it can be. Ha! I have it. Maybe my boss has got a match on some purty gal, an' they've come here to do their courtin'. Hanged if I don't investigate!"

Johnny Smile would miss a good square meal any time, for sake of having some fun, and although there was no meal in the perspective, at present, he proposed to satisfy his curiosity in regard to the feminine voice.

Noiselessly he threaded his way among the ponderous machinery, and soon gained a position behind a pile of boxes, close in the vicinity of the persons whose voices he had heard.

From this covert he could see, without being seen, and he was not long in making out who the talkers were.

They were Jerry Justice, and Mabel Lamont, and the latter was speaking.

"Well, you are satisfied of your wife's falsity?" she said, interrogatively.

"Yes, I am!" was the hoarse reply. "I didn't take much stock in your reports, at first, but when, with my own eyes, I saw her, to-night, with her arms around the neck of Deadwood Dick, I needed no further proof to convince me."

"You didn't believe Deadwood Dick's explanation, then?"

"Bah! no! I'm not such a fool as to believe that sort of palaver!"

"Will you try to get your wife back?"

"Well, I guess not!" and Jerry laughed grimly. "She's made her bed, and she can lay in it. Henceforth, she is no more to me than the veriest stranger. She has disgraced me, and been the means of breaking up our home, and now she can go. My future life shall be devoted to but one object, and that object is revenge!"

"On whom?—your wife?"

"No! On that infernal scoundrel, who caused the estrangement—Deadwood Dick!"

"I cannot blame you, Mr. Justice, for I too hate that man, and if I can be of any assistance to you you can command me. How do you propose to strike?"

"I have not really formed any plans, as yet. To be sure, I could have killed the scamp, outright, to-night, but I do not want the crime of murder on my head. My revenge can best be accomplished, by torturing him. If I could dethrone him from the power he now holds, it would be the hight of my ambition!"

"Then, I can help you!" the Frenchwoman said, eagerly. "Promise to keep secret what I tell you, and I will explain how I mean."

"I promise. You have already proven yourself a friend to me, and, rest assured, I shall not betray your confidence."

"Very well. In the first place, you are aware that there are a large number of men in camp who have no employment, simply because they will not submit to the rule of this would-be monarch, Deadwood Dick!"

"Yes, I am cognizant of the fact!"

"A good share of these men are in poor circumstances," pursued Miss Lamont, "and are growing desperate. Perhaps it will surprise you, when I tell you that these same men have been systematically organized into an oath-bound body, which is daily growing numerically stronger, and are ready for a revolt at a moment's notice!"

"I have received intimation that secret meetings were being held," Justice replied, "but did not know anything definite."

"Probably not, for everything has been managed quietly. I have taken great care not to let any of our plans leak out!"

"You?"

"Yes, I, for I am the organizer and captain of the band. It was I who projected the scheme, and I have enrolled the men, and prepared them for the work ahead! As soon as we are strong enough in numbers, we intend to drive Deadwood Dick from Pistol Pocket, and take possession of the mines, which will be run on the communistic plan, each and every member of my band to share and share alike in the gross earnings!"

"Indeed! Well, it appears that you are quite a diplomat!" Jerry said.

"Rather!" Miss Lamont replied, with a light laugh. "And, now, I have a proposition to make to you. You are no longer in Deadwood Dick's employ, and consequently no longer identified with his interests. Join my band, which I have named the Lion Legion, and I will make you commander, in my stead. The men will welcome you as their leader, and your influence over the employees of Deadwood Dick will draw a number of them over to our side, no doubt, and thereby swell our ranks! By doing this, when we are ready to strike, you will get your desired revenge!"

"You are right!" Justice said, slowly. "I will gladly accept your proposition."

"Very well. There will be a meeting of the Legion at this place, two hours before daydawn, and you must be present. Rap upon the door, and when asked to give the password, simply say 'Kismet,' and you will be admitted."

"Very well. You can depend upon it; I will be here," Justice replied; and soon afterward, he and Mabel Lamont took their departure from the mill.

CHAPTER XII.

A PLOT AND A COUNTERPLOT.

At about the same time, that evening, that witnessed the meeting between Deadwood Dick and Jerry Justice, in the rear of the stamp-mill, three men were seated at a table, in one of the upper rooms of the Grand Pacific, engaged in conversation.

They were provided with wine and cigars, and several empty bottles proved that their thirst had not gone unquenched.

The party consisted of Lord Lester Lindley, Jack Jasper and Mountain Mose, the ex-toll-gate keeper.

The ruffian's hair was closely cut, and face smoothly shaven, however, and taking into consideration the fact that he was sprucely dressed, no one, not even his most intimate acquaintances, would have recognized him as the terror of Pretty Pass.

The change in his appearance had indeed been most wonderful, and he looked more than ten years younger.

Lord Lindley was about the worst looking object imaginable. He had managed to clean the dirt from his clothes, but his face was swollen and patched with court-plaster, and one eye was entirely shut, as if his lordship had recently participated in a prize-fight.

He was indeed a ludicrous looking nobleman.

"Yes!" he was saying, "this chap must be removed, and that, too, immediately. Curses seize him. I would kill him myself, only that I do not want the burden of a murder on my soul. He deserves killing, but I don't want to be responsible for his life!"

"Nor I!" declared Jack Jasper. "What I want is to have him out of the way until I can get a firm footing in the gulch, and then I can snap my fingers at him!"

"No! no! That won't do!" his lordship declared. "for if he ever got free he'd make me trouble. He must die, and so must the girl. Then, and only then, Jasper, will we be safe."

"I don't know but what you are right, there!" Jasper returned, thoughtfully. "But I don't want blood on my hands!"

Mountain Mose, otherwise English Eph, who had been listening to the conversation, while he puffed vigorously at his pipe, now broke in.

"Ye'r mighty scrupulous about your souls!" he said, with a coarse laugh. "Why, yer might as well commit a crime as to think or plan one, for et don't make a durned bit o' difference to Old St. Peter. He'll tell ye to skip down ther stair-case, just the same. But, seein' as ye'r so chicken-hearted, ef ye'r both afeard to do ther job, I'm open fer engagement, providin' thar's plenty o' the filthy in ther perspective. Lucre is what I'm lookin' fur, an' I ain't so purticler what ther job is, neither!"

There was a brief silence, during which Lindley and Jasper gazed at each other, inquiringly.

"So you'll do the job, and guarantee to do it perfectly?" his lordship demanded, of the ruffian.

"Oh! you bet, when I feel the palm of my right duke tickled with a wad of legal tenders. Bizness is bizness, you bet, and the mare won't budge an inch without proper fodder!"

"How much do you want, to do the job?"

"That depends. You want this gal, Baby Bess, and ther feller, Deadwood Dick, forever silenced?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"The sooner the better—to-night, if you can arrange it."

English Eph remained for several minutes in deep meditation, before speaking again.

"It's a durned risky job," he said, finally. "Deadwood Dick is a cuss on wheeis, and if a fellow was to make a miss or a bungle, he'd be a dead-goner in the jerk of a lamb's tail. Reckon I'm enough for him, however, so I'll agree to do the job up brown 'twixt now and sunrise for two thousand dollars, spot cash, in advance, and guarantee you'll never see the pair again 'til Judgment Day. Ef that ain't cheap enough, ye kin do the job yerself, or get some one else to do it!"

"I'll give you one thousand down, and the other thousand when I'm satisfied you've done the job!" his lordship said, warily.

"Nixee!" Eph replied. "When I give my word I'll do the job, that's enough, and so I won't touch the biz until I get the money!"

After a moment's reflection, Lindley arose from the table, and motioning Jasper to follow, they went out into the hall, where the two held a whispered conversation.

When they re-entered the room, Lindley said:

"Well, old man, I will accept your terms, but you must first promise me faithfully that you will do the job *sure*, and do it to-night."

"And promise you I do, by all I hold sacred!" Eph declared, holding one hand aloft. "Deadwood Dick and Baby Bess shall see the last of earth before morning. I swear it! And their remains shall be secreted in a place known only to me, and my lips shall be sealed forever!"

This declaration appeared to satisfy Lindley, for he reseated himself at the table, and taking out a large wallet, extracted a roll of bills, counted out two thousand dollars in hundred-dollar notes, and shoved them over to English Eph.

"There you are!" he said. "My part of the bargain is settled—now settle yours between this hour and sunrise. If you fail me, I'll spend ten times that sum to have you killed. I mean it—every word of it—and you will do well to bear it in mind!"

Eph took the money, rolled it up, and thrust it into his pants pocket, the expression of his sinister face betraying that he was highly elated.

"You can bet yer life you'll never be troubled by either the gal or the mayor ag'in!" he declared. "I ain't much of a gospel believer, an' don't expect to get much fun out o' any world 'cept this, an' so when I kin rake in a couple o' thousan' yards o' comfort, fer only a few minutes' work, I'm goin' to do it ev'ry time!"

English Eph took his departure, Jack Jasper soon following his example, while Lindley retired for the night.

In the bar-room below, Jasper and English Eph met soon after.

"Well, what do you want?" the latter demanded. "I know'd you meant for me to wait down here, when you stepped on my toe in under the table!"

"I want to see you," Jasper said. "Come outside into the Pocket, where we will be out of earshot."

They left the hotel, and were soon out in the Pocket, where there were no buildings, and there was no danger of their being overheard by eavesdroppers.

"Now, then!" said Jasper, when they came to a halt, "I want to put a straight question to you. Do you want to earn a fortune—say a hundred thousand dollars, for instance?"

English Eph started.

"A hundred thousand dollars!" he ejaculated.

"Yes."

"Waal, I don't know but what I'd like to freeze onto a sum like that. But, what aire ye drivin' at, anyhow?"

"I will tell you," Jasper continued: "This Deadwood Dick and Baby Bess must not be killed, but you must take them alive, and shut them up where they will be safe, and cannot escape. Lindley, mind you, is to be assured that both are dead and buried. Understand?"

"Yes. Go on!"

"Well, you see, when Lindley is satisfied of the girl's death, he will go back to England, and lay claim to the vast Carleton estate, and deem himself secure. When he is installed in his new possessions, I will rescue Bessie from captivity, and woo and wed her, which will be an easy matter, as I shall play the role of Deadwood Dick. Then, the three of us will set out for England, and bleed Lindley, who will disgorge handsomely, rather than risk an exposure of his villainy, and have to yield up the estate to the real heir. See?"

"You bet!" English Eph responded, with enthusiasm. "You're a brick, Jasper, and I'm

with you, tooth and toe-nail. But, how about Deadwood Dick?"

"Oh! I simply want him shut up until I can sell out his interest in this Pocket, which ought to net several hundred thousand dollars, at the least. Then, when we get ready to start for England, he can be set at liberty, and if he can get Pistol Pocket back again, why, that's his lookout, not ours. In this way, you see, outright murder will be avoided, and at the same time we will be feathering our nest. But, remember, Deadwood Dick must be imprisoned in a different place from Baby Bess, and she must have no intimation that he is not at liberty, and still in command of Pistol Pocket!"

"I understand, perfectly!" Eph assented, with a nod. "Yer plan is a capital one, an' I'll carry out my share of it to the letter, providing I am to share alike wi' you, when we bleed Lindley."

"It's a bargain! But, the job must be done to-night."

"All right. I'll attend to it. Anything else?"

"Yes. Before you go, I will give you a suit of my clothes. When you capture Deadwood Dick, you are to take all his clothing and effects, and bring them to me, while he is to be given the suit I give you in exchange."

Jasper went to his room, but soon returned, and gave to the ruffian a neatly wrapped bundle; then English Eph took his departure, to carry out his part of the villainous plot.

While chuckling over his own scheme, Jack Jasper retired to his room, to await the coming of another day, when he was to assume the role of Deadwood Dick, whose almost exact counterpart he certainly was.

CHAPTER XIII.

A QUEER PRISON AND ITS OCCUPANTS.

AFTER seeing Floy Justice safely installed in the home of Baby Bess, Deadwood Dick sought his office, expecting, of course, to find Master Johnny Smile there, but, as the reader is aware, Johnny was very conspicuously absent, and as he had the keys, Dick could not gain access to the office.

"Confound the boy, I've a mind to discharge him for this disobedience!" Dick growled, and forthwith he set out in search of the truant youth.

But Johnny was not to be found about town, and not knowing of the stamp-mill rendezvous, Dick finally had to give up the search as a bad job.

As it was not yet late in the evening, he dropped into the Grand Pacific and had a chat with Joe Garry, and later, wandered into the gaming-room, to watch the various games in progress.

Since coming into charge of Pistol Pocket, Dick had refrained almost entirely from the pastime of card-playing, but, to night, upon invitation, he formed one of a party of poker-players, with the intention of remaining but a short time.

But the game was unusually exciting and fascinating, and it was after two o'clock in the morning ere he arose from the table, a couple of hundred dollars winner.

Lighting a cigar he left the hotel, and made his way toward his office.

The sky had become densely clouded over, and as most of the lights along the street were out, the darkness was intense.

Dick knew every inch of the way, however, and could have gone over it blindfolded.

Little expecting that he had enemies abroad, he walked along, paying little or no attention to his surroundings.

And that was where he made a sad mistake.

He had nearly reached his office, when a muffled figure stepped quickly out from the doorway, and Dick was dealt a blow upon the head, with some heavy instrument, and felled to the ground, insensible.

A second man now emerged from the doorway, and joined the assistant.

"Hev ye killed him, Mose?" he queried.

"No, only stunned him," was the reply. "Give me the chloroform, and then bring the bosses. No time must be lost, for we've got ter work like thunder to git thru with our job before daylight."

The second man, who was none other than English Eph's associate and pal, Bill Monk, at once produced a bottle and sponge, and then hurried away.

By the time the Englishman succeeded in stupefying Dick beyond the possibility of immediate recovery, Monk had returned with three horses.

The insensible victim was then bound to the back of one of the animals, after which the ruf-

fians mounted the other two and rode away, and the scene of the assault and capture was left deserted.

When Dick recovered consciousness, it took him some time before he could comprehend his surroundings, or what had happened, and he felt of his head and limbs to make sure that he was not dreaming.

Above him was the blue dome of the heavens: in front, back, and either side of him were perpendicular walls of solid rock, which towered upward some fifteen feet, and whose surface was as smooth and unbroken as a sheet of glass.

In size this singular pit, which was a freak of nature was about twenty feet square, by fifteen deep, and there was no visible way of escaping from it without outside assistance, for no human being could clamber up the perpendicular and glassy sides.

As soon as his eyes got accustomed to the light, Dick made a discovery.

If he was a prisoner, he was not alone, for in one corner of the pit, lay a blonde young man, of somewhere about his own age, apparently fast asleep.

Dick had never seen him before, but the reader will have no difficulty in recognizing him as Sir Clyde Carleton, whom we introduced at the beginning of our story, and who was precipitated through the trap.

In another portion of the pit, was a recently killed buck deer, and a plentiful pile of fuel; so it was evident it was not intended that the captives should starve.

The next discovery which Dick made, was that he was not attired in his own clothing, but was arrayed in an entirely different suit, his own having been appropriated by his captors, as also, had been his money, private papers, and weapons.

"Well, that's cheeky!" he muttered. "I wonder what this exchange of clothing was made for, anyhow, and who it was who thumped me on the head? I'll wager that rascal, Lord Lindley, had something to do with it. Ha! I remember, too, of seeing Lindley in company with a fellow who looked enough like me to be my brother. Can it be that these two men have conspired to put me out of the way, in order to give my counterpart a chance to step into my boots, as the future ruler of Pistol Pocket? By Jove! it looks so!"

Although not bound, Dick did not attempt to rise from a sitting posture, for several minutes, for he felt sore in every joint, and came to the conclusion that he had been tumbled into the pit promiscuously.

The more he considered his situation, the firmer became his belief that his first surmises in regard to the Lindley conspiracy, was right.

"I am in a clever fix!" he concluded, "and I've no one to blame but myself. Knowing that I had enemies in camp, I should have been on the lookout. The only wonder is that they did not kill me, outright!"

After feeling of himself, to make sure that no bones were broken, he finally succeeded in getting upon his feet.

"I wonder who my companion is?" he mused, as he approached the recumbent Englishman. "Evidently he is not aware that he has visitors. Reckon he will be somewhat surprised. Hello! there, partner!"

Sir Clyde awoke with a start, and sat bolt upright, staring at Deadwood Dick, as if he could not believe the evidences of his own senses.

"Who are you?" he demanded, when he found use of his tongue.

"I am Deadwood Dick, the Mayor of Pistol Pocket!" Dick replied. "Who are you?"

"My name is Sir Clyde Carleton!"

"What! Sir Guy Carleton, of England?"

"The same. But, what do you know about me?"

"Not very much. I have heard, however. What brings you here, and in this strange position?"

"I came to America in search of the heiress of an old English estate," Sir Guy said; and then he went on to relate the experiences of the night of his arrival at the toll-gate tavern of Mountain Mose.

According to his statement, he was stunned by his fall into the well, and knew no more until he awoke to find himself in the pit, where he and Dick were now held as prisoners.

In exchange Dick told him all he knew about his own predicament, and the two were soon on the friendliest of terms, and exchanged confidences freely.

"You came to this country in search of Lady Beatrice Carleton, I take it?" Dick said.

"Yes, I did."

"Were you sent by Lady Carleton?"

"I was. I started a short time prior to her death, and several days in advance of Lord Lindley, who also seeks to find and destroy her, in order that he may come into the Carleton inheritance."

"You were betrothed to Lady Bess, some six years ago, I believe, before she came to America?"

"I was. But you puzzle me. How do you, an utter stranger, come by so much information?"

By way of explanation, Dick narrated concerning the arrival of old Ishmael and Lady Bess in Pistol Pocket, and all that had transpired since, including his encounter with Lord Lindley.

"Then, you attribute your capture to Lindley's scheming?" Sir Clyde asked.

"Yes. He well knew that as long as I was about the camp, he would not dare make an open attack upon Baby Bess, and so I have no doubt he caused the assault upon me."

"Then, even now, Lady Bess is in deadly peril!" Sir Clyde said, anxiously.

"Yes, I am afraid so. But one thing puzzles me, and that is, who is this fellow who looks like me, and who I believe intends to usurp my position as Mayor of Pistol Pocket?"

Sir Clyde did not immediately reply, but studied Dick's face inquiringly.

"I think I can throw some light on that!" he at length said. "Something like two months before I sailed for America, an ex-convict from Van Diemen's Land made his appearance in the old country, and I saw him frequently in conversation with Lord Lindley, and communicated my suspicions to Lady Carleton, that the two were hatching up a conspiracy concerning Lady Bessie, and this is what caused her, eventually, to start me off for this country, when it was found that this ex-convict had disappeared from his usual haunts."

"This fellow's name was Jack Jasper, and were his hair as long as yours, he would be almost your exact counterpart!"

"Then the problem is indeed solved," Dick replied, "for although I have had but one glance at the fellow who so resembles me, the name of Jack Jasper has been on the register of the Grand Pacific Hotel for several days. That fact proves to my satisfaction that the two are in collusion in this conspiracy!"

"No doubt of it, now! And I am greatly worried lest harm befall Lady Bess!" Sir Clyde said.

"No more so than myself!" Dick hastened to assure. "There is a bare possibility, however, that there will be some delay before Lindley offers to molest her. I gave my office-boy orders to stand ready to defend her, when I was not around, and I believe he will do so. Then, too, perhaps Lindley will hold off until Jasper gets firm footing in my place, if that really is his plan."

"I hope it will be so!" Sir Clyde declared, with flashing eyes. "Ever since his lordship heard of my betrothal to Lady Bess, we two have been bitter enemies, and I now long for the hour when I can meet the villain face to face, at the sword's point, when we will have a settlement of our differences!"

"I rather opine I shall have a bone to pick with him myself," Dick said, grimly—"that is if any harm comes to Baby Bess. In the mean time, the first important thing for us to do, is to look out for ourselves. We must get out of here, and that, too, as soon as possible."

"But how? I have tried repeatedly, but my efforts were all in vain. The sides are almost as smooth as glass, and what few crevices there are are too far apart for arm's reach."

"Yes, that's so!" Dick assented, scanning the cold granite walls that encompassed them. "And I presume the top couldn't be reached by one of us standing on the other's shoulders."

"I think not. The pit looks to me to be fully fifteen feet deep."

"You're right! Escape in that way is out of the question!" Dick said, scratching his head, as if in search of an idea. "Hang it! there is one thing I don't understand, Carleton. Where does all your meat and fuel come from?"

Sir Clyde laughed.

"Well, you've got me now!" he answered. "Although I've been in this dive for something over a week, you're the only person I've seen since my incarceration. When I have awakened in the morning, I have always found plenty of fuel, and some kind of meat at my command, the latest addition to my larder being the deer you see yonder. I found it as you see it, when I awoke yesterday morning."

"Well, it is evidently intended you shall not starve!" Dick said, "and so, while we are considering the best plan of getting out of this hole,

I propose that we kindle a fire and sample a little of the meat."

Sir Clyde assented, and they at once set to work.

Sir Clyde had a clasp-knife and a box of matches; a fire was soon started, and, half an hour later, Dick had prepared a steak that was fit for a king.

While dispatching the meal the two prisoners discussed the possibilities and probabilities of escape, at length, but failed to hit upon any feasible plan, until a sudden thought occurred to Dick.

"If I only had not been deprived of my weapons," he said, "I think I see a way out of this fix."

"How?" Sir Clyde asked, eagerly.

"Why, I could extract enough powder from my cartridges, so that I could make a blast in the rock, half-way up, and in that way make enough crevices, so that we could work our way out."

"Then, if powder is all you want, we are all O. K.!" Sir Guy said, joyfully, "for in an inside pocket of my shirt I have a little bag, containing nearly, if not quite, a pound of the best powder. The gun I brought West with me was a breech-loader, and of course I had to have loose powder. This was not discovered, although my captor deprived me of everything else!"

"Hurrah! Then we're in luck!" Dick cried, jubilantly. "Give me the powder, and if we don't make it sick for Lindley and Jasper, you can put me down for one of the biggest gillies the country ever produced!"

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO LOCKS OF HAIR.

Both Dick and Sir Clyde were of course highly elated, even at the faintest ray of hope of making their escape; so they lost no time in hastening the preparations.

Sir Clyde produced his powder, and it was found that he had enough for several blasts. On examining the sides of the pit Dick found that the formation was not of granite but of rock far less hard and quite brittle.

Half-way up the eastern side was a crevice of sufficient size for the purpose they had in view, but it could only be reached by one standing on the other's shoulders.

Although not a man accustomed to much hardship, Sir Clyde was physically as strong as a young bull, and as he knew nothing about charging a blast, he agreed to act as under man.

So, removing his boots, Dick clambered upon Sir Clyde's shoulders, and in a few minutes had prepared the blast ready for firing, having made a good hole and attached to the charge a long fuse, so as to get out of the way before the explosion.

"Ain't you afraid of being hit by flying rocks?" Sir Clyde asked, anxiously.

"Oh! no, I guess not, as I didn't charge the crevice heavily. However, it will be well enough to stand to one side," Dick said.

He then seized a long, lighted stick from the fire, which he applied to the fuse, and then he and Sir Clyde retreated hastily to the far side of the pit, where there was but little danger of their being hit.

A moment later there was a loud report and a mass of dislodged rock was hurled both up and downward, quite away from the anxious men, and when they proceeded to examine they found the smooth walls of the pit so shattered that it would be a comparatively easy matter to climb up into the outer world, which they at once proceeded to do.

"Ha! ha!" Dick cried, swinging his hat in the air, "we are free, at last!"

"You're right!" Sir Clyde declared, with enthusiasm. "But where are we?"

Dick gazed around him.

They were far up the mountain side and surrounded by a dense forest, but at last they emerged upon a bluff where there were no trees, and found themselves looking down into Pistol Pocket, far below, where the young mining-city lay basking in the sunlight.

"Lurrah!" Dick cried. "Yonder is Pistol Pocket, now! So look out, Lord Lindley, for, so sure as my name is Dick Bristol, that sure will we make you wish you were never born!"

"Here's my hand on that!" Sir Clyde said, with enthusiasm. "Will you go down into the camp at once, friend Dick?"

"No, not until nightfall. Jack Jasper has no doubt assumed my position, and it might be dangerous for us to venture into the Pocket in broad daylight. In fact, I think we had better not betray that we have escaped at present."

"Why not?"

"Well, Jasper will of course stand prepared to attack us again, in case we should escape, and if he succeeds in palming himself off as myself, to the satisfaction of my men, why, the odds against us would be bigger than we could stand. Then, too, if Baby Bess has been captured and spirited away, it is our duty to find her, dead or alive, and we can work much better in disguise."

"Yes, yes, I see. Then you will not venture into the camp until nightfall?"

"No. We will approach as near as practicable, and wait until darkness enables us to reach my office, where I have a good assortment of disguises concealed, and, once we are properly fixed up, we can roam about the camp freely, and take note of what is going on without fear of discovery."

Accordingly, they set out for the camp. The day was already well advanced, and it would be nearly dark when they reached the foot of the mountain.

To at least two persons, the night witnessing Deadwood Dick's capture, was extremely tedious, for no sleep visited their eyes—the two, of course, being Jack Jasper and Lord Lionel.

At the first streaks of dawn, Jasper arose and sought his lordship's room, to find him up also.

"Have you seen anything of Eph yet?" Jack demanded, sinking upon a chair.

"No. Have you?"

"Not a thing. I haven't slept a wink from worrying about the matter. I wish the fellow would come."

"So do I, for I am anxious to know how he has succeeded. I haven't had any sleep, either. Somehow, I haven't much reliance in English Eph. He's a tricky rascal, and if he thought he could make an additional stake by playing us false, he'd do it."

"Pshaw! dismiss such thoughts as that," Jasper encouraged. "I'd trust Eph quicker than any other fellow I ever knew. He's white meat, all the way through when it comes down to business. Ha! that's the fellow now, I'll wager!"

For just then there had come a heavy knock outside.

Lord Lindley hastened to answer the summons, and admitted, surely enough, the ruffian, Eph, who stalked grimly into the room, and deposited a well-wrapped bundle on the table, after which he seized a bottle of liquor which stood there and took a long swig.

"Ah! that's the stuff to brace a feller up after a hard night's work!" he said, smacking his lips with gusto, as he took a seat.

"Well, one would think you *had* been working," his lordship declared, with a glance at the half-emptied bottle. "Have you succeeded in accomplishing your work, sir?"

"Well, I should smile!" Eph returned, with a chuckle, and at the same time he held out his huge hands, which were stained with blood.

Both Lindley and Jasper shuddered, as they beheld the apparent evidence of the ruffian's crimes.

"Oh! I fixed 'em both!" Eph averred, grimly, "an' ye nee'n't be afraid of ever bein' troubled by 'em, ag'in, till you git on the t'other side of Jordan. Thought mebbe you'd want something to remember 'em by, however, an' so I brought yer a lock of their hair!" And so saying, he laid two locks of hair upon the table, the colors of which corresponded respectively with that of Deadwood Dick and Baby Bess.

"Ugh! what possessed you to bring that hair here?" Lindley cried, angrily, at the same time seizing the hair, and throwing it into the open grate. "I'm not fond of such relics. What did you do with the bodies?"

"I put 'em where they'll never be found, 'til they're past recognition!" the ruffian declared.

"What have you in the bundle?"

"Deadwood Dick's clothes. Jack, heer, wanted me to fetch 'em along, so he could wear 'em!"

"A good idea!" Lindley said. "And so you swear that Deadwood Dick and the girl, are really dead?"

"You bet!"

"Then I am satisfied. Here is an additional hundred dollars, as reward for your promptness."

English Eph accepted the amount, eagerly, and shortly afterward left the room.

"Well, *that* job is settled!" Lindley remarked, when he was gone, at the same time drawing a long breath of relief.

"Yes, and I must prepare myself at once, to play the part of Deadwood Dick," Jasper declared. "Will you start at once for England, my lord?"

"Certainly. I shall leave Pistol Pocket for

Skinner's Bend, on horseback, to-night, and there take the stage for the nearest railway station. In three weeks' time I hope to be back in England, and the master of Carleton House."

"While I shall be the undisputed ruler of Pistol Pocket!" Jack Jasper added. "By one fell sweep, my fortune is made!"

CHAPTER XV.

JOHNNY SMILE AND PARD.

MASTER JOHNNY SMILE, although accredited with being constitutionally lazy, had passed through a good many novel and varied experiences for a lad of his age, and on any thing that partook of an adventure he was by no means slow.

He had caught every word of the conversation between Mabel Lamont and Jerry Justice, and, naturally quick of comprehension, he fully understood the plot against Deadwood Dick's life.

"Well, heer's a go!" he mused, after the couple had left the stamp-mill. "They're goin' ter try and give Dickey ther bounce aire they, an' Jeremiah Justice has gone over to the other side, an' Jerry an' his wife Les had a fallin' out. Humph! kinder glad I did meander forth from the offis, now, 'cause I've sandwiched onto some valuable news, which Dick will be glad to get."

"Et won't do fer to let this other party get the upper hands nohow. Me an' ther boss must nip their little scheme in the bud. I'll go an' then try to git back and be present at the meeting here, two hours before daybreak." And, gathering himself up from his cramped position, he left the stamp-mill.

Takmg out his watch, a present from Deadwood Dick, he lit a match, and saw that it was after one o'clock.

Enterng the camp, he found it wrapped in darkness, with the exception of the hotel, and one or two other places.

Johnny first sought the office, but Dick was not there, so he went back to the Grand Pacific, and made inquiries, only to learn, from Joe Garry, that Dick had taken his departure full three quarters of an hour before.

Johnny now grew worried.

Having overheard of the plot to dethrone his employer, it was but natural that he should conclude that some harm had befallen him.

Leaving the Grand Pacific, he visited what few other business places were open, but still failed to find his master.

"Well, this takes the bun," he muttered. "Ef my old boss has bin foully dealt with, there'll be one big racket raised in these 'ere diggin's, or my name ain't Johnny Smile. Mr. Jeremiah Justice will find he lost his grip when he went back on my boss!"

Disconsolate at not finding Dick, the lad wandered about the Pocket throughout the livelong night, in hopes of finding a clew to the, to him, suspicious disappearance.

Once in every half-hour he visited the office, but found it deserted.

The shanty of Baby Bess was also darkened, and so finally, tired of tramping around, and as day was close at hand, he sat down in the office doorway, to await until it was really light, and hoping that Dick might make his appearance at any minute, he postponed returning to the stamp-mill.

But at last day broke, grand and glorious, and the eastern horizon became tinted with the golden light of the rising sun.

Then Johnny arose, locked the office door, and was about to leave the vicinity of the office, when Floy Justice appeared in the doorway of Bessie Carleton's shanty.

"Johnny!" she called. "Come here. I want to see you."

Johnny hurried forward, thinking perhaps that she had some news of Deadwood Dick.

"What d'ye want?" he queried.

"Have you seen Bessie?" Floy demanded, excitedly.

"No. Why?"

"Because I cannot find anything of her."

"When did you see her last?"

"Last night, when we went to bed together. I soon fell asleep, and when I arose I found the window up, and Bessie gone. Oh! what can have become of her!"

Johnny scratched his head, and tried to look wise.

"Dunno!" he said. "Kinder looks like she had bin carried off. Thar hes bin some darned mysterious things goin' on about camp during the night."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, Deadwood Dick is missing, too, an' I can't find hide ner hair of him!"

Johnny then went on to explain how he had overheard the conversation in the stamp-mill, and what had passed between Mabel Lamont and Jerry.

Floy listened, her eyes flashing with indignation.

"Then Jerry Justice has indeed proven himself a villain," she declared.

"I had hoped that I would be able to bring him back to me, and that we would be happy together once more. But if, as you say, he has gone over to this Mabel Lamont, my only hope is gone, and I shall hate and despise him. That he should turn upon the man who has so kindly befriended him, only goes to prove what a wretch he is. Johnny, this news arouses me to a sense of duty—arouses all the tiger in my nature. If Deadwood Dick is in trouble, we must get him out of it!"

"Ye'r a-shoutin' sense now!" declared Johnny, with enthusiasm. "Ef any one's bin goin' fer my boss, we'll go fer him, an' don't you forget it. But, how 'bout Baby Bess?"

"No doubt if Deadwood Dick has been captured and placed in confinement, the same parties who captured him also captured Bessie. Johnny, there is more about this matter than either of us understand. We must disguise ourselves as miners, and work together carefully. If we were to make a stir, ten to one it would not benefit us, for it would only put these rebels on guard and hasten them to action, when the camp was without a commander."

"Durned ef you ain't right. You'd make a fu'st-class general, you would. So I'll p'int you commander, an' I'll be private!"

"Very well. Our plan must be to join the rebels in our disguises, and in that way endeavor to find out the whereabouts of Deadwood Dick and Baby Bess. At the same time we will be able to keep posted on the rebel's plots, and foil them!"

"Good idea. But where are the disguises to come from?"

"I have a plenty at my house. I will get them during the forenoon!"

They conversed for perhaps an hour longer; then Johnny announced his intention of making one more all-around canvas in search of Deadwood Dick before they entered more fully into the plans they had formed.

Johnny was about to take his departure, when he suddenly made a discovery that caused him to clutch Floy by the arm.

"Look!" he cried, pointing down the street. "There comes the boss, now!"

And Deadwood Dick it apparently was whom they saw approaching, for Jack Jasper looked every inch like the Mayor of Pistol Pocket, as he came striding along.

Johnny awaited his master's coming with great eagerness, but the expression upon Floy's face was not so joyful.

"Johnny," she said, when the *pseudo-Richard* was close at hand, "do not betray any surprise, but act perfectly natural, so as not to appear suspicious. *That man is not Deadwood Dick!*"

Johnny stared.

"Git out!" he said. "What yer givin' us? Don't yer s'pose I know my boss when I see him?"

"Not you don't! There is another man in camp who very much resembles Deadwood Dick, and this is he. It may be that he intends to palm himself off in your master's stead, and if so, that will account for Deadwood Dick's disappearance. Keep a close tongue in your head, till you see me again, and do not let this man suspect that you are in any way suspicious of the fraud!"

With these directions, she turned and re-entered the shanty, while Johnny met Jack Jasper at the office door.

Without appearing to do so, Johnny gave the features of the ex-convict a swift, sharp scrutiny, and, as a result, came to the immediate conclusion that Floy Justice was right.

Just above the right eyebrow, on Dick's face, was a small mole, which, when he was excited or vexed over anything, assumed a scarlet color.

There was no such a mark on the face of Jack Jasper, a fact that immediately attracted Johnny's attention.

Then, too, Jasper approached the office at a swaggering gait that was very unlike Deadwood Dick's easy, graceful stride.

"Well, boy, why haven't you got the office open and swept out?" Jasper demanded, gruffly, a manner hard at contrast with Dick's usual "good-morning."

"Because I swept the office out last night, and

you wasn't around this morning to attend to the biz!" Johnny promptly returned. "You're a nice one to go off, of a night, an' leave a feller in the office, tellin' him that you'd be back right away!"

"It's none of your business how long I stay!" was the retort. "Open the door."

Johnny opened the door, as directed, and they entered the office.

Jasper sat down at a table, and proceeded to examine some letters, which he had evidently obtained at the post-office.

Saying nothing, but keeping up an awful thinking, Johnny began his morning's work of dusting and regulating things.

While the two were thus occupied a miner entered.

"Good-morning, boss," he saluted.

"Good-morning," Jasper replied. "What's the matter; ain't you working to-day?"

"Not yet, boss. None of the boys hasn't gone to work yet, 'cause Jerry hasn't show'd up. They hain't got no orders, an' don't know what to make of it!" the miner replied.

"Tell them to go to work at what they were at yesterday, and you take charge of them for the present!" Jasper ordered. "Jerry has seceded from our ranks, and I shall have to look up a new superintendent!"

"What did Jerry quit for?" the miner asked, curiously.

"Ooh! I understand he's separated from his wife," Jasper replied, carelessly, "and claims that I am the cause of the separation, which is a lie. As soon as I get through, here, I will come to the mine, and endeavor to straighten out matters!"

The miner left, apparently satisfied.

When he had finished reading the letters Jasper turned to Johnny Smile.

"Come here, boy!" he sharply commanded.

Johnny obeyed, and Jasper handed him two ten-dollar notes.

"There!" he said, "take that, and go!"

"Go where?" Johnny demanded.

"To the devil, for all I care!" was the gruff reply.

"I don't want you any more."

"But, what have I done, to merit discharge, sir?" Johnny asked.

"Oh! nothing, particularly, only I shall have no further need of your services."

"All right, boss!" Johnny said, flinging the dusting-brush into the corner. "I hain't worry partic'ler 'bout workin' for a skin like you, anyhow!" and putting on his cap, the youth walked from the office with the independent air of a king.

CHAPTER XVI.

A BRUTE IN BONDS.

FULLY satisfied that English Eph had forever disposed of Baby Bess, Lord Lindley was greatly elated, in the belief that victory was his.

His plan of action was now clear.

Under the cover of nightfall, he would forever leave Pistol Pocket, and hasten to New York.

There he was acquainted with an expert shyster lawyer, whom he would employ to forge certificates of the death and burial of Bessie Carleton. Then, he would go back to England, and there would be nothing to prevent his laying claim to the Carleton fortune.

During the forenoon, the arch schemer purchased a horse, and stocked his saddle-bags with enough provisions for the Overland trip to Skinner's Bend, from whence he could journey by stage to a station on the Southern Pacific Railroad.

The remainder of the day dragged slowly away, each hour seeming to him double its usual length, so anxious was he to get away.

He was sitting upon the hotel piazza, smoking a cigar, toward sunset, when a servant came out and announced that a lady wanted to see him in the parlor.

"I wonder who it can be," he muttered. "Can it be that Eph did not make away with the girl, and that she has come to accuse me of my complicity in the matter?"

A savage scowl darkened his brow, and a wicked gleam entered his fishy eyes as he threw away his cigar and went to answer the summons.

On entering the parlor, he found but one person there—a woman, tastefully attired, decidedly good-looking, and young in years.

It was Mabel Lamont.

Lord Lindley started back, with an oath, at sight of her.

"You here!" he ejaculated, with evident astonishment.

"As you see," she replied, with a ripple of musical laughter. "Are you not glad to see me, my lord?"

"No! I am not!" he growled. "What in the world ever brought you to this country?"

"A Guion-line steamer, and a purpose more honorable than that which brought you. I grew tired of being a lord's wife, and living in a London tenement, and so, learning that you were about to set out for America, in search of the lost heiress of Carleton House, I came on ahead of you!"

"To make your fortune, I suppose?" with a sneer.

"Well, partly for that purpose, and partly for another," was the cool reply. "You see, Lindley, I have grown tired of being put off, and not being recognized in my rightful position. So, knowing your errand to America was to find Beatrice and put her out of your way, I came on, with a view to forcing you to do the right thing by me. I am your legally wedded wife, and intend to be recognized as such before the world. No more tenement-house obscurity on my plate, if you please!"

Lindley grew livid with rage at this.

"Curse you!" he hissed. "We'll see whether you'll blackmail me, or not. You'll find you've undertaken the biggest job of your life. You're not my wife, nor can you prove that you are!"

"I can!" Mabel cried. "The papers to prove it are already in my possession, or rather, in the hands of my lawyer, in London. If you do not make me Lady Lindley before the world—"

"What will you do?"

"I'll have you arrested for the murder of Beatrice Carleton, and hung by the neck, until you are dead. Nay! do not seek to interrupt me, for it is useless. You hired English Eph to kill Beatrice Carleton, or Baby Bess, as she is called, and he has done it, and is willing to turn State's evidence against you. I have him in my power, and you are at my mercy. Now, you will fully understand why I have come to America. You would not give me my rights in England, but you must give me them here!"

"Oh, must I?"

"Yes, you must. There is nothing else for me to do but force you to come to terms. You are a lord—why shouldn't I, your wife, be a lady? You are a murderer, and a wretch from me will place you on the gallows. Now then, will you take me back to England with you, share the Carleton fortune with me, or will you not?"

"I will not!" Lindley said, decidedly. "I defy you to do your worst. In England, if you dare to follow me there, I will have you arrested for the murder of your husband, Mark Montrose, whom you killed, because, adventuress that you are, you imagined you had me in your net, and in your power. But you made a grand mistake. The marriage ceremony, which you supposed made you and I one, was a mere farce, and you are no more my wife than the veriest stranger. So you have no claim upon me, and I dare you to do your worst. If you ever set your foot on English soil, it will be your doom, Mrs. Montrose, a-la-Lamont!"

"I shall take care that I do not set foot on English soil until I have either forced you to remarry me, or caused you to pay the penalty of your crime. Now, which will you do? Will you marry me, or will you hang? Suit yourself. In either case I shall come into possession of the Carleton fortune, as I can prove that I was your wife before the death of either Baby Bess or yourself!"

"I'll never give in to you. As I told you before, I defy you!"

"Very well," Mabel said, rising. "Suit yourself. The town is already excited over the disappearance of Baby Bess, who has won a warm place in the hearts of the people, and I have but to betray your complicity in the awful crime, and you will be strung up to the limb of the most convenient tree in true Western fashion. Good-day, my lord."

She moved quickly toward the door, but before she could reach it he sprung upon her, and clutching her by the throat, he bore her back upon the sofa, where she had been sitting.

In vain she sought to release his terrible grasp upon her slender throat.

There was a fierce gleam of desperation in his ugly eyes; there was murder in his heart, now that he knew he would never be safe while she lived.

Summoning all his strength, he tightened his grip, nor did he relinquish it until long after she had ceased to struggle, and he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that she was dead.

Then he arose, and gazed at the white, distorted face with a shudder.

"Well, it's done, and can't be undone," he muttered. "Now I must conceal the body and put as many miles as possible between me and this town before the murderer is discovered."

There was a closet in the room, and he found by pressing the body into it and closing and fastening the door, he could for a time conceal his crime.

And this he proceeded to do.

When the job was accomplished, he hurried from the hotel to the stables, and within a few minutes he was in the saddle.

Thence he rode out of the camp at a leisurely gait, but no sooner had he entered Pretty Pass than he put spurs to his horse, and rode swift as the beast could carry him.

"Free!" he breathed, between his clinched teeth—"free at last! Now, if the horse does not fail me, let them catch me, if they can!"

Evident it was that the horse meant to do its best, for it tore along through the pass at a rapid rate, until it finally halted in front of the toll-gate, which was closed.

"Curse the luck!" he growled. "Am I thus to be balked on the road to success?"

He sprung from the saddle, and tried in vain to open the heavy barrier, but the strength of one man was inadequate to the task.

Turning, in search of some heavy rock or timber with which he could batter down the obstruction, he suddenly found himself in the grasp of two masked men, who, before he had hardly time to understand his situation, had his wrists neatly confined in handcuffs and his ankles tied together with a rope.

"My lord," spoke one of the men, whose voice Lindley recognized with a shudder, "I think you must be tired, after journeying so far such a dark night as this, and therefore, we must ask you to stop with us awhile, until the route gets clearer."

And that voice!

Once heard, it could not easily be forgotten.

It was the voice of the successor of one of the bravest men who ever trod the Wild West, one who knew no fear—the voice of Dick Bristol, or Deadwood Dick, Jr.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HAWK AND THE DOVE.

The murder of Mabel Lamont was discovered the next day, and created a great sensation, which, however, was short-lived, after it was found that the probable murderer, Lord Lindley, had escaped.

Jack Jasper, as Deadwood Dick, offered a reward for the Englishman's capture, and also had notices posted, offering rewards for information concerning the whereabouts of Baby Bess, Johnny Smile and Floy Justice.

This, in the main, of course, was but a blind, to screen the fact that he knew where they were, which, so far as the latter two were concerned, he did not.

He had a vague intuition, however, that Floy and Johnny were still in camp, in disguise, and were watching an opportunity to strike him a blow that would depose him.

This idea was in a measure strengthened by the fact that, one by one, the men who had formerly been in Deadwood Dick's employ were dropping off duty and remaining in apparent idleness.

Inquiry revealed to the impostor that there was supposed to be in existence in the camp a secret organization, whose intention it was, as soon as its ranks were strong enough, to fight for possession of Pistol Pocket.

This caused Jasper considerable uneasiness, and after a consultation with his newly appointed superintendent, English Eph, it was agreed to send Bill Monk to neighboring camps in search of new help.

As a result, for every man who seceded from Jasper's employ two were replaced; and the more fully to carry out his deception, the impostor conducted the business on the principles and conditions which Dick had adopted. He studiously sought to keep on the right side of the men, and avoided creating any suspicion that he was not what he claimed to be by every possible device.

The days multiplied, and camp life went along in its usual course.

The curiosity over the murder of Mabel Lamont, and the disappearances of Baby Bess, Johnny and Mrs. Justice, gradually died out, and Jack Jasper began to feel a gratifying sense of security.

With the riches that daily rolled in upon him, he was fast striding along the road to fortune, and at the same time living literally like a king.

Not to be off his guard, he had employed Bill Monk to keep himself posted as to the operations and plans of the Lion Legion; but Monk gained little news, and what he did gain, was not indicative of immediate hostility.

One day, a week after the discovery of the murder of Mabel Lamont, Jack Jasper mounted his horse and rode away from Pistol Pocket.

An hour's ride brought him to an isolated cabin, among the mountains, and here he dismounted.

The door was secured on the outside by a padlock but Jasper had a key to it, and in a moment he was inside the cabin.

There was but one room, and this, with the exception of a chair, was unfurnished.

Upon the chair, was seated no less a personage than Baby Bess, looking sad and pale.

Her face lighted up with joy, however, when she saw him whom she believed to be Deadwood Dick, and she sprung to her feet, and rushed toward him.

"Oh! Mr. Bristol! Is it you?" she cried.

"Well, I rather reckon it is," was the reply. "Don't it look like me?"

"Oh! yes! yes! And have you really come to rescue me from this terrible imprisonment?"

"I have. It was only to-day that I obtained a clew to your whereabouts, and forced your abductor to direct me to this place!" Jasper replied. "I have been greatly worried over your disappearance, and have had the surrounding country searched for you. How have you fared?"

"Oh! I cannot complain, except that it has been terribly lonesome. A strange man, whom I never saw before, has brought me food, every other day, and so I have not wanted for anything to eat."

"Were you awake, when you were captured?"

"No. I and Mrs. Justice retired rather late and I soon fell asleep. The next thing I knew was, when I awoke, to find myself here. Who was my abductor, Mr. Bristol?"

"A fellow called Mountain Mose. He was employed by Lord Lindley to kill you, but his courage failing him, he shut you up here until Lindley had left the country, when, I presume, he intended to release you!"

"Where is Lord Lindley, now?"

"He has gone back to England to lay claim to your fortune, believing Mountain Mose's assertion that you are dead. But, he will find out that he has made a big mistake—that is, providing you are agreeable to my proposition.

"The fact is, Bessie, I have grown to love you dearly, in the short time I have known you, and as I want a wife, and am well able to take care of one, I want you. Marry me, and we will go at once to England, and bounce Lindley from his new acquisition, and land him in jail; for I shall take Mountain Mose with me, as evidence against him!"

"Oh! Mr. Bristol. You surprise me very much!" Bessie said, flushing rosy. "Getting married is something I hadn't ought to think of for a number of years, yet, for I am only sixteen, and that is too young."

"Pshaw! no! Plenty of girls get married at that age, and as a rule, their lives are the happiest for it. Both you and I have plenty of riches in our own individual right, and there is no reason why we cannot see all the pleasures that money can procure. Besides, you need a protector, to espouse your cause. There may be a hard struggle before Lindley can be forced to give up your estate, and with no one to look out for your interests, except lawyers, you would be cheated and defeated at every turn. Marry me, and I can fight your battles for you, and we will triumph over your enemy, and victory will be ours!"

"Oh! Mr. Bristol, I—I don't want to get married, indeed I don't—not, at least, until I am older. Besides, you know, I was betrothed to Sir Clyde Carleton, when I was only ten years of age, and it was my mother's desire that I should marry him when I got old enough."

"You'll never have the chance. Mountain Mose has informed me that Sir Clyde died before Lord Lindley left England. So you can have no cause for hesitation on his account. Oh! Bessie, if you only knew how truly I love you, you would at once consent to become my wife. Please say that you will marry me, and you will make me the happiest man on earth."

He dropped on his knees before her, and, taking her hand, kissed it in true lover-like fashion.

Bessie was very much agitated, and it was several seconds ere she could speak.

"Really, Mr. Bristol, you must not press me for an answer now," she finally said, gently, but firmly. "This declaration of love, on your part, comes so unexpected that I am greatly surprised. While I respect you, and am very grateful for what you have done for me, I could not think of promising to marry you until I have had time to consider."

"Then, I shall hope that your answer will be

favorable, but I pray that you will not keep me long in suspense, and, as soon as you are mine, we will start for England. How long must I wait, dearest?"

"Perhaps forever!" Bessie replied. "At any rate, I must have a week's time in which to consider."

"Very well. A week's time, then, it shall be. I expect, to-morrow, to sell out all my interests in Pistol Pocket, to the agent of a corporation, so that, when we are married, there will be nothing to keep me on this side of the Atlantic. So come, now, and we will start back for camp."

Accordingly, they left the cabin, and mounting Bessie in his saddle, the ex-convict set out for Pistol Pocket, on foot, leading the horse.

There was a gleam of triumph in his eyes, for, as Baby Bess had not said outright that she would not marry him, he considered it almost as good as granted that she would become his wife, and thus the final consummation of his plans would be effected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

THAT same afternoon, four persons stood in the stamp-mill, after the mill had closed work for the day, and was, with the above exceptions, deserted.

It was after sunset, and already the shadows of nightfall, were beginning to gather thick and fast, within the great building.

The persons referred to, were Deadwood Dick, Sir Clyde Carleton, Johnny Smile, and Floy Justice. Johnny, with a nut-brown face looked like a half-breed and Floy with close cropped hair and brown face looked like his brother. They had both come into camp together three days after their disappearance and so well acted their part that everybody supposed them to be, as they claimed—the two boys of old John Simus, whose wife was a Kioway squaw.

All were cleverly disguised, and appeared to be rough, commonplace miners.

Deadwood Dick was speaking, and his words were directed to Johnny Smile.

"You are quite positive about this matter, boy?" he demanded.

"Yes, we are sure!" Floy replied, for both. "We've overheard the whole plot, an' this chap that's been palmin' himself off as you, is goin' to get himself into a fix."

"Tell us their plans, again," Dick said, thoughtfully.

"Well, you see, these fellows who constertoot the Lion Legion," spoke out Johnny, "aire now thoroughly organized an' ready fer a fight. Jerry Justice hes trained 'em like a reg'lar general, an' they would make a strong fight. Me an' Floy, here, hes belonged to 'em, fer about a week, an' we knows purty much all about 'em. Weapons an' ammunition have bin arrivin' every day, an' every man has got a repeatin'-rifle, and ca'ttridges enuff to last him a month. So, ver see, they're pretty well heeled.

"But, that ain't all, by a long shot. That Jerry has got a head on him, as long as a horse, and he's had some of his pals going around, and buying up all the ca'ttridges in the camp. As no wagon-train will arrive until to morrow afternoon, you're shut out, in that direction."

"Not so badly," Dick declared. "I've had interviews with all the men employed in the mines, and they are not only well armed, but, to a man, are ready to stand by me when the critical moment arrives. But, go on. What else?"

"Well, the Legion have been ordered ter meet here, to-night, at midnight, ready for duty. The attack will be made in the early morning, when the night hands of the mines, and the day hands exchange places, and are not particularly prepared for a fight.

"In the mean time, when the meeting takes place to-night, there's going to be a big time. This feller, Jasper, is to be captured, fetched to the mill, an' execooted, so that, as Jerry supposes, the miners won't have no one to command 'em, and his victory will be all the more easy!"

After the execution, there's goin' to be a big blow-out, on whisky, an' Jerry's goin' to git his gang drunk enough so they'll be in good fightin' trim, when it comes daylight. Come here!"

Johnny then led the way to a large tool-box, and raised the lid.

The tools had been removed, and in their stead, were several demijohns of whisky—enough in bulk, apparently, for a regiment.

"This ain't all I've got to show you!" Johnny chuckled, and he led the way to a room originally intended for an assayer's office, but which had never been put to that use.

The door was locked, but Johnny had a key and quickly opened it, and they entered.

The room was a large one, and its only contents were several boxes of cartridges and other ammunition, and a stack of repeating rifles, the most of which were new.

"This is their arsenal!" Johnny explained, "I'm gunmaster. Every weapon is loaded with fourteen cartridges, and so would depopulate a town, had we not pulled their bullets from the shells!"

"What! you have not done that?" Dick ejaculated.

"You bet we have—Floy an' I. When they go to shoot they won't hurt nobody!"

"Johnny, you're a brick! Now, I see my way clear!" Dick said, with enthusiasm. "It is not probable that these fellows will ask for their weapons, before morning, eh?"

"No! I reckon not. Besides, before they have a chance to ask for 'em I shall make myself scarce. The door is too strong to be easily broken down, and as I have the only key to the lock, they can't well get into this until I see fit to let 'em!"

"Then, my plan of action is clear. I will at once quietly get my men into this room, and lock them in. I will then drug this liquor so powerfully, that one drink, will knock a man silly. In this way, I have no doubt but what we can achieve a bloodless victory!"

And after due consideration, it was concluded to adopt this plan, and Dick and Sir Clyde took their departure to make the necessary arrangements, while Johnny and Floy Justice, in their disguise, lingered about the stamp-mill, to await the coming of the Lion Legion.

The hour of midnight arrived.

Within the stamp-mill several lanterns, suspended from the beams, gave forth but a feeble light, which only seemed to multiply the shadows that haunted the great building.

Over two hundred rough, bearded men were gathered within the mill, and seated around on various objects, conspicuous among whom was Jerry Justice, who paced to and fro with seeming impatience.

At length, however, the door opened, and English Eph and Bill Monk entered, leading between them Jack Jasper, whose arms were handcuffed behind his back.

The impostor was very pale, but his face blanched to marble whiteness when his gaze fell upon a noosed rope, which hung down from one of the beams.

He was led into the circle formed by the Legion, and there confronted by Jerry Justice.

"Deadwood Dick?" the latter said, "your career as ruler of Pistol Pocket is about to end. These men whom you see gathered about you, have decided to take possession of the mines on the commonweal plan, and as they have no further use for you, they have concluded to get rid of you, and have done with it. Besides, I have personal reasons of putting you out of the way. You estranged from me the affections of my wife, and broke up my home, and I am entitled to vengeance!"

"Mercy! mercy!" cried Jasper. "There is a mistake here. My name is not Deadwood Dick. My name is Jack Jasper, and he whom you knew as Deadwood Dick is dead. This fellow, English Eph, killed him. I hired him to do it, and since then, I have been playing the part of Deadwood Dick myself. But, I am not Dick Bristol, nor have I done anything to harm any one of you."

"Bah! no ghost stories like that won't go down! You're Deadwood Dick fast enough, and, even if you weren't, you're in our way, and have got to swing!"

"For God's sake! You are not so inhuman as to hang an innocent man, I hope? I insist that I am not Dick Bristol, and if you ask English Eph he will tell you the same!"

Justice turned to the ruffian.

"How is it, Eph?" he asked.

"Humph! The cuss lies, of course!" Eph grunted. "He's Deadwood Dick. I never heard of such a chap as Jack Jasper!"

"As I thought!" Justice growled. "Boys! string the galoot up, and by sunrise Pistol Pocket shall be ours!"

The order was promptly obeyed.

'Mid Jasper's shrieks and begging for mercy, the noose was placed around his neck and he was then pulled half-way up to the rafters, where he was left dangling.

He struggled but a few seconds and then was silent, death resulting from strangulation.

"Now, boys!" cried Justice, "has every man got his cup?"

"Ay! ay!" cried a chorus of voices.

"Then, bring forth the liquor and let's drink to our first step on the road to victory!"

Each man had a tin cup, and into this a lib-

eral quantity of liquor was poured, and then, after a toast by Jerry Justice, the many thirsty throats drank the fiery beverage.

Within ten minutes' time over two hundred insurrectionists were stretched out in various positions, insensible.

Then Deadwood Dick and his men filed out of the office and made prisoners of the sleepers, achieving a victory that had cost but one life.

The rest can be briefly told.

Jerry Justice and his followers were tried the next day, and found guilty of a contemplated seizure of the mine, and Deadwood Dick as judge imposed a fine of twenty dollars each upon them, and the choice of either forever leaving the camp, or rejoining the Miners' Union under Dick's proprietorship.

The majority gladly accepted the latter terms and were sworn in, really grateful at the leniency shown.

Jerry Justice and some fifty others, whose presence was considered offensive, were escorted out of town, set at liberty, and warned that if they ever returned, they would be lynched on sight.

So once more Pistol Pocket resumed the even tenor of its way, under Deadwood Dick's regime.

Lord Lindley, whom Dick and Sir Clyde had stopped while he was making his escape, was not set at liberty until his crime was made known and his character exposed; then he and English Eph were given over to a committee of ten who, after an hour's absence, returned without them.

Floy Justice left Pistol Pocket soon after the departure of Jerry, and it is not at all improbable that she has gone in search of him. Woman-like, she could not give him up.

Sir Clyde and Bessie Carleton met, of course, and grew fond of each other, and in a few short weeks were married.

As they had no present desire to return to England, Dick appointed Sir Clyde his business-manager, and soon after, in company with Johnny Smile, set out for a trip of combined business and pleasure.

In which we shall meet him again.

THE END.

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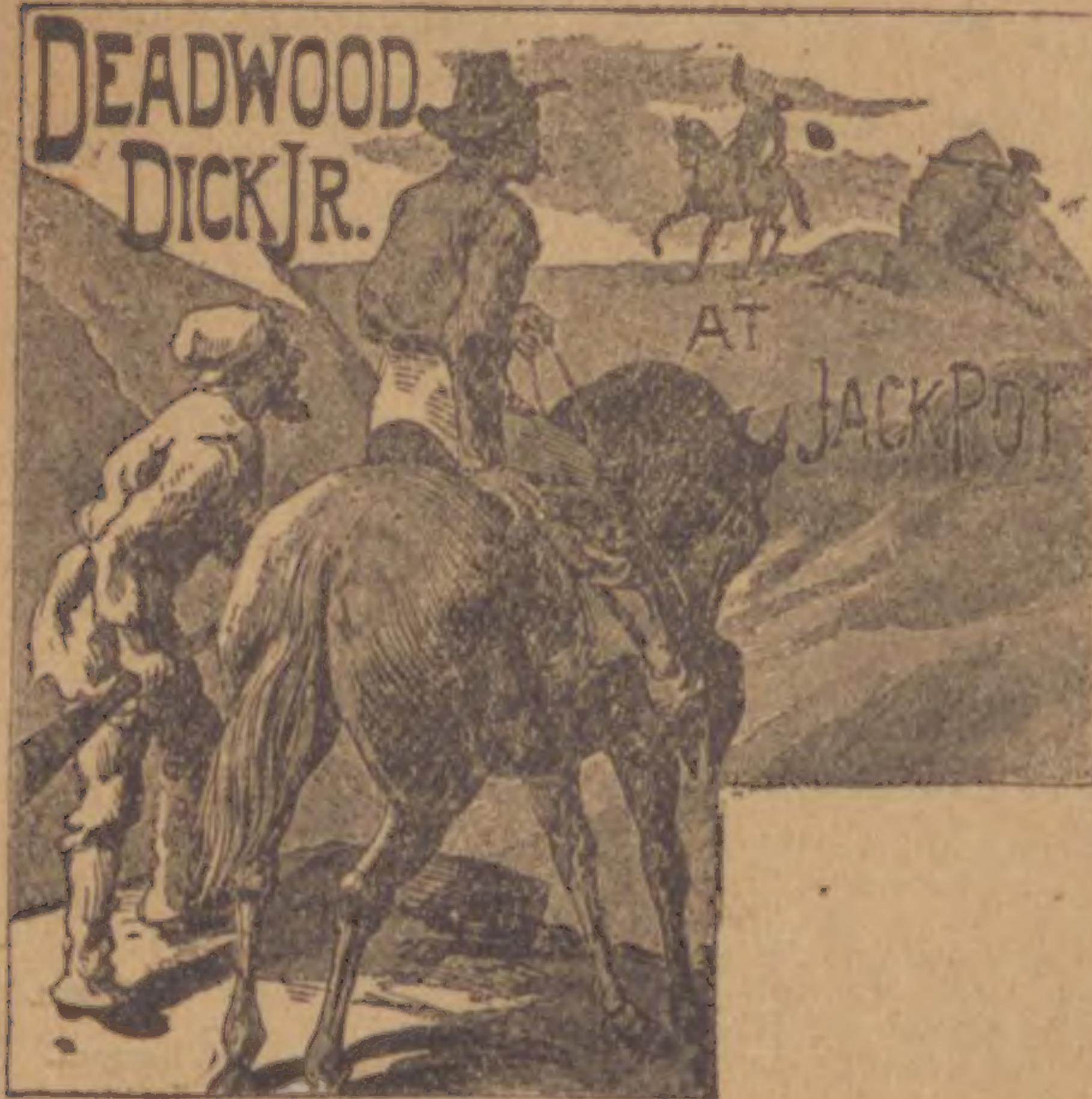
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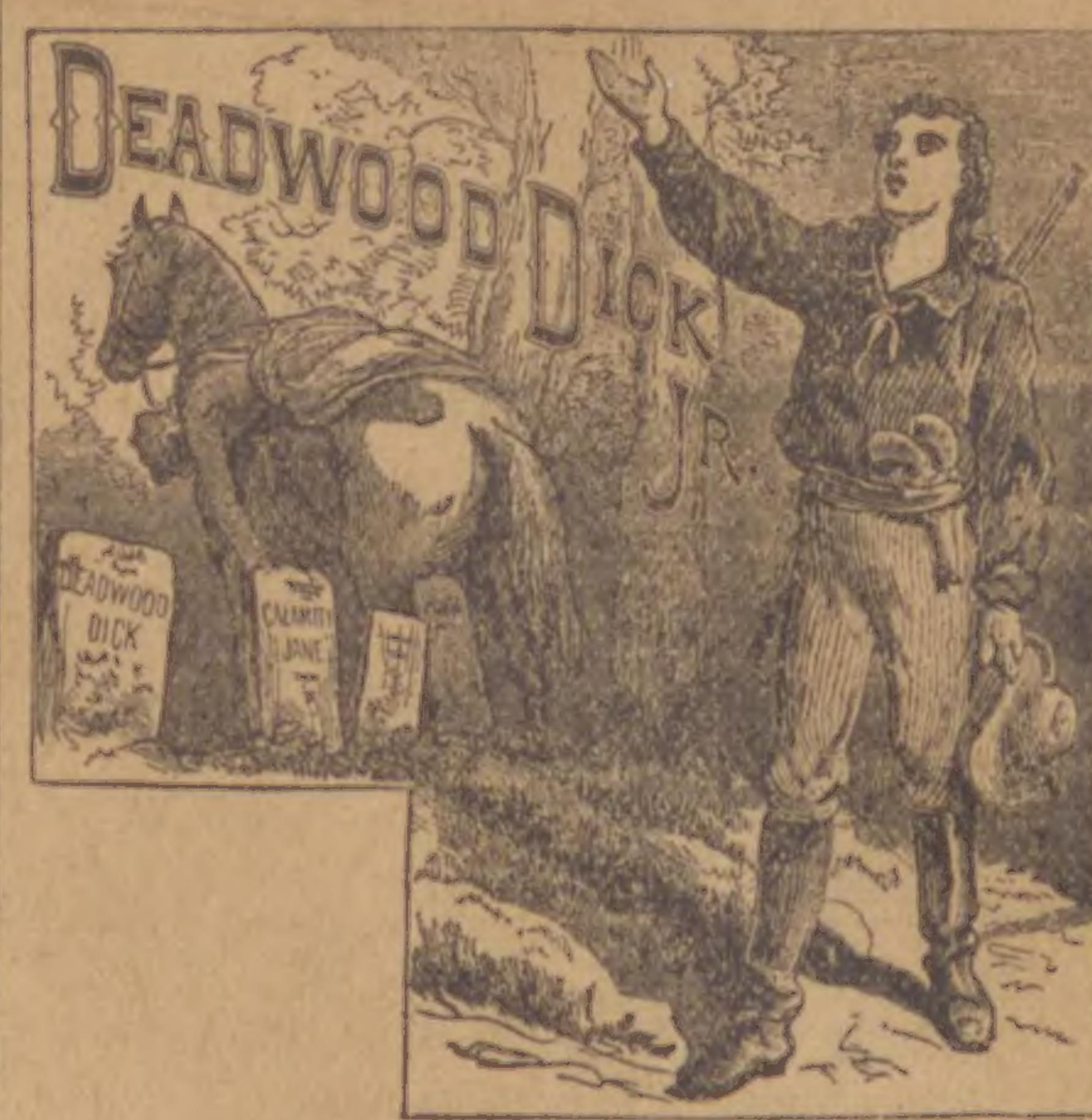
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